

**‘An exploratory study of parent and Educational
Psychologist perceptions of dual educational placements’**

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**STUDENT DECLARATION
UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON
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PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE IN EDUCATIONAL
AND CHILD PSYCHOLOGY**

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted for any degree and it is not being concurrently submitted for any degree.

The research is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the professional Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

The thesis is the result of my own work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A full reference list is included.

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Abstract

This research explores the perceptions of dual educational placements held by parents who have experience of their child receiving this category of education and the perceptions of dual educational placements held by Educational Psychologists who have encountered this type of education during their practice. The aim of the research was an initial investigation into this area, which has experienced minimal previous research, to obtain an overview of aspects considered important in dual educational placements. This was conducted using a qualitative methodology, involving interviews with seven parents and eight Educational Psychologists to collect data; this data was subsequently thematically analysed.

The research findings suggested that, despite much governmental legislation promoting inclusive education, parents and Educational Psychologists expressed that a dual educational placement can, at times, meet a child's special educational needs more effectively than a mainstream or an alternative placement alone. The research findings indicate that systemic factors are important for determining the effectiveness of a dual educational placement, as well as consideration of individual characteristics of a child's special educational needs. Participants noted various benefits and limitations of mainstream and alternative educational placements. As such, this research claims that a dual educational placement may be able to overcome tensions between the benefits and limitations found at individual placements, and provide a balanced placement which could cater for a child's needs holistically. The findings from this research may have implications of supporting existing and future evidence-based practice of educational placement of children with SEN.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter begins with an outline of the research and highlights frequently used terms. Following this, it considers a dual educational placement in some detail. It then places the research in the context in which it was conducted and explains how it originated. Next, the aims of the research, including the distinctive contribution which it makes, are stated. Finally the epistemological position of the researcher and theoretical frameworks of the research are detailed.

1.1 Outline of research

This research investigates the perceptions of dual educational placements held by parents who have had experience of their child receiving this category of education. It also explores the perceptions of dual educational placements held by Educational Psychologists (EPs) who have encountered this type of education during their practice. In line with the description given by the Department of Education and Skills, in the statutory guidance '*Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs*', dual educational placements refer to instances where 'a child can attend more than one school' (DfES, 2001, p23). This is the description of a dual educational placement adopted for this research. A further requirement for participation in this research is that the parents and EPs will have had experience of a child who attends more than one school on a weekly basis; those who do not meet this criterion will be excluded from participation. It is proposed that the experience of a dual educational placement may present unique challenges and opportunities. The focus of this research is on pupils whose dual educational placement comprises a mainstream educational placement alongside an 'alternative' educational placement. Mainstream educational placement refers to any which is 'not a special school or an independent school' (DfES, 2001, p8). An 'alternative' educational placement refers to a provision aimed to take into consideration a pupil's special educational need (SEN), such as an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) provision, Speech and Language provision, Moderate and/or Severe Learning Difficulties special schools, and Pupil Referral Units (PRU). To obtain a placement at an 'alternative' educational provision, even on a part-time basis, a child is required to have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The 'alternative' educational placement, in this research,

refers to a physically separate building and institute from the mainstream school. It is acknowledged that there are many other placement options considered to be similar to dual educational placements: for example, a six week placement within a PRU during a single school year, whilst the pupil remains on role at a mainstream school; attendance at a mainstream school during which a pupil is regularly withdrawn to the school's attached Specialist Resource Base or attendance at mainstream and alternative placements situated on a co-located site; or a pupil being educated at home for part of the week alongside a placement within a school. The type of dual educational placement focused on in this research was narrowed to attendance at two physically separate settings on a weekly basis because this experience may present particular limitations and benefits. Additionally, by narrowing the placement variables, findings may be more relevant when considering the validity future dual educational placements within the research context.

To clarify: the researcher considers a dual educational placement to be an instance where a child attends both a mainstream and alternative placement within one school week, which are situated at physically separate locations. Through preliminary informal discussion with EPs in the research context and within a London local authority, it appears that many EPs have encountered a dual educational placement within their careers; however, they were a more common occurrence in the rural setting where the research was conducted. In this research context, the drive to dual educate a child often came from parental preference and was supported by the child's caseworker. A caseworker had responsibility for overseeing a child's statement of SEN through a number of methods: by attending yearly reviews of this document; by considering information about the child from parents, school and sometimes other professionals, such as Speech and Language Therapists, Paediatricians, Child and Adolescent Mental Health workers and EPs about a child's SEN and the provision they received; and evaluating if their SENs were being met by the placement and provision. Parents and caseworker appear to have the primary responsibility for the decision of a dual educational placement. EPs were sometimes requested to provide an assessment of a child's SEN which often included giving information about the child's current needs and the type of environment and experiences that they would benefit from; however, they were not directly and explicitly involved in making placement decisions.

1.2 Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Provision

In accordance with the Department for Education and Skills' Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, 'a child has SEN if he or she has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her' (DfES, 2001, p6). In the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), the term 'special educational provision' is believed to mean additional requirements to facilitate access to education: not necessarily a separate place of education. As this would indicate, SEN can be met in mainstream and alternative placements. The 1978 Warnock Report suggested that a child who has a SEN is likely to have one or more of the following additional requirements:

- the provision of special means of access to the curriculum through special equipment, facilities or resources, modification of the physical environment or specialist teaching techniques;
- the provision of a special or modified curriculum;
- attention to the social structure and emotional climate in which education takes place.

It might be argued that what SENs are and how they can be met will differ between people and organisations, depending on their constructs (understanding and experience) of the SEN label, and this is likely to influence their perceptions about appropriate 'provision' for this varied group of children.

Professionals, such as EPs, and parents have a responsibility for identifying a child's SEN and what provision should be in place to meet those needs as part of a regular frequent multi-disciplinary assessment (DfES, 2001). This is likely to involve consideration of whether a child's needs could be met within a mainstream educational placement with appropriate differentiation and reasonable adjustments. It may also lead to deliberation about appropriateness, including benefits and limitations of education, of an alternative educational placement. Therefore, a pupil should only experience a dual educational placement when it is felt by professionals and/or parents that it is the most effective method of meeting a child's SEN.

1.3 Context and Location of the Research

This research was conducted in a large East Anglian County Council in the United Kingdom, in which the researcher was employed. This region, from which the population sample was taken, has a mix of city, suburban, coastal and rural habitats. It includes several pockets of deprivation as well as some affluent wealthy areas, particularly in the agricultural habitats aspects. The researcher anticipated that, because of the range of habitats, parent and EP participants would be drawn from different contexts - this may result in greater breadth of experience of dual educational placements. Each context may provide difference between culture of a family, school and Educational Psychology Specialist Support Service. The researcher expected that these variations would provide greater depth to the information obtained in the research. Within the research context were pockets of ethnic diversity, particularly in the city and coastal regions of the County Council. Information on the Council's website, gathered in 2009, states 92.43% of the population were white British. The most common ethnic minority communities in the County Council were reported to be Portuguese, Lithuanian and Latvian.

1.4 Origin of Interest in Dual Educational Placements

Whilst employed as an SEN Officer (this involved writing Statements of Special Educational Needs, making decisions pertaining to the level of financial support a child would receive in their placement and being involved in making decisions about placement), the researcher was introduced to the concept of a dual educational placement. During this time, the researcher came to understand the importance of the professional advice supplied by an EP in influencing placement decisions. As an Assistant Educational Psychologist within an Educational Psychology Service, which involved working within a variety of mainstream and alternative settings, the researcher developed insight into the logistical challenges of a dual educational placement.

At the time of this research, the researcher was employed as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in a County Council Educational Psychology Specialist Support Team. Concurrently, the researcher was completing postgraduate training in the

Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate at the University of East London, cohort 2008-2011, and this research was completed as part of the requirements for qualification.

Dual educational placements became of interest to the researcher whilst employed as a TEP. At this point, the researcher undertook joint casework involving a child experiencing a dual educational placement. The pupil in question was attending a mainstream placement one day a week and an alternative placement four days a week. The researcher attended a multi-agency meeting, involving the child's parents and several professionals, including staff from the alternative placement and mainstream placement, speech and language therapist, paediatrician, caseworker and Senior EP (SEP), to discuss the pupil's future educational placement. Subjects the researcher found of particular interest, which were discussed during the meeting, included: the academic and social functions of each placement; the responsibility a school has to encourage development of an inclusive society; access to specialist resources and trained professionals; communication between the two placements; perception of professional competence; the meaning of inclusion; the SEN Code of Practice; and other government legislations. In addition to this, the concept of 'labelling' and the potential stigma attached to attending an alternative educational placement was explored. The researcher perceived that the EP played an effective, objective role in providing evidence-based information relating to topics of discussion in this meeting.

During a debriefing discussion with the SEP, the researcher learnt that dual educational placements were a relatively common option for meeting the needs of children with SEN in the County Council. However, the SEP was not aware of research relating to this type of placement but indicated that it would be something that would be welcomed by the County Council's Educational Psychology and Specialist Support Service. The researcher identified that, despite this reported lack of research undertaken on dual educational placement, it was supported by the government as a strategy of inclusive schooling (DfES, 2001). The County Council in which this research was undertaken did not have a policy relating to dual educational placements but was interested in producing one. Preliminary discussions with EPs in the County Council the researcher was employed in, and with EPs in a London local

authority, indicated that they were not aware of any formally specified criteria for receipt of a dual educational placement. It was believed by the EPs the researcher spoke to informally that there are a variety of reasons from which a dual educational placement originates and they often described these as “a grey area”. The researcher perceived that exploration of the topic of dual educational placement would provide a unique contribution to research pertaining to the placement of children with SEN. Also, it was anticipated that research in this area would highlight the need for guidance and instruction written into government policies and followed by Children’s Services staff to be evidence-based.

1.5 Research Aims

This research was an initial exploration into the SEN provision of dual educational placements. The broad aims of the research were to investigate the variety of views held by research participants about dual educational placements. The main research questions were:

- What are parent and EP perceptions of a dual educational placement?
- What are the differences and similarities between parent and EP perceptions of dual educational placements?

As stated previously, it is hoped that the research findings will provide a unique contribution to an area in which research is lacking. It endeavours to bring attention to and stimulate further investigation of dual educational placements, and develop knowledge and future practice in this area. It is anticipated that the benefits and limitations of a dual educational placement and the aspects which influence its success will be explored. It is thought that information from this research may allow for improvement in the evidence-based advice given by EPs and enable parents to make informed decisions about the educational placement of their child. It is also hoped that this research will support parental choice of educational placement for their child should a dual educational placement appear to be a viable option.

1.6 Epistemology and Theoretical Underpinnings

The epistemological position which the researcher has taken in this research is constructivist, which focuses on a constructed rather than an ontological reality. Constructivist epistemology holds the belief that reality is independent of human thought, but meaning or knowledge is constructed (Miller, Vandome and McBrewster, 2010). The philosopher-historian and social constructivist, Foucault (1969), postulated that knowledge is a product of cultural, institutional, professional and personal histories, and the intellectual environments within those histories. When reflecting on the history of educational provision for children with SEN, it can be postulated that there is evidence for a relationship between the most dominant construct of SEN at a point in time/history and educational placement of children with SEN. Thus, it could be argued that the leading cultural belief of the most appropriate educational placement for children with SEN changes in line with popular academic thinking. Kincheloe (2005), a Critical Constructivist identified four characteristics of critical constructivism, which were: (1) Knowledge is socially constructed; (2) political power plays an exaggerated role in the production of knowledge; (3) unification of logic and emotion is important in the process and production of knowledge; and (4) multiple realities exist. These beliefs form a basis for approaching this research and will be explored further in Chapter 2: Literature Review.

The establishment of the epistemology of constructivism has, in itself, been an academic construct. It has influenced knowledge of child development, learning and teaching practices. Jean Piaget's (1950) stage theory of cognitive development has been recognised as the formalisation of the constructivist learning theory. Piaget highlighted the role of children in actively constructing an understanding of the world themselves and the influence of culture on their development. Piaget suggested, through cognitive processes labelled accommodation and assimilation, that thoughts and feelings about individual experience can be internalised by learners as knowledge. Vygotsky (1962; 1978) also supported the constructive nature of development. He focused on the relationship between a child's experience with language and thought development. This highlights the potential benefits of collaborative learning experiences. Social constructivist learning theories, unlike behaviourist theories, hold the belief that children are not born as 'blank slates': they

argue that only when a child has understood and given meaning to their experiences has knowledge been imparted to a child (Jean Piaget, 1950).

Through taking a constructivist epistemological position, an emphasis is put on the importance of placing a child with SEN in the most appropriate educational placement as environment, experience and social interaction are believed to be tools for learning. In line with a constructivist epistemological position, the researcher perceives that, predominantly, educational placement decisions made for children with SEN are products of social and political frameworks: these reflect the understanding of SEN held by a society's political and, at times, religious leaders.

In this research, the relationships between perception of dual educational placement held by parents and EPs, and prominent thinking reflected in political frameworks about educational placement of children with SEN will be examined. It is proposed that individual constructs will have been influenced to varying degrees by cultural, political, institutional, professional and personal histories. The researcher assumes that, from a constructivist standpoint, there is likely to be multiple perspectives on the topic of dual educational placement and acknowledges that individual perspectives evolve over time and are affected by context. The researcher will aim to examine the dual educational placements through the eyes of the participants, rather than the eyes of the researcher (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008). However, the researcher acknowledges that their own individual constructs are likely to influence interpretation of research evidence.

The researcher's epistemological and empirical position was also influenced by systemic psychology. The latter relates to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development in particular. Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated the importance of studying development in context and identified four ecological environments to take into consideration. These are:

- **Microsystem:** this refers to an child's immediate environment, such as, family, school and peers;

- Mesosystem: this refers to links between microsystems, such as the influence that experiences in the context of the home may have in school;
- Exosystem: this refers to environments separate from the individual's immediate environment which still impact upon the individual;
- Macrosystem: this refers to the wider environment, such as society, culture and political agendas.

The researcher considers that Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development may be able to address, in particular, the relationship of the macrosystems of dominant political agenda and the microsystems of a child's educational placement. It may also be a useful model when considering how the mesosystems which link the child's three primary microsystems of mainstream placement, alternative placement and home affect the success of a dual educational placement.

1.7 Historical Overview of Placement of Children with SEN in Britain

A difficulty encountered in this research is the existence of differences in terminology for SEN throughout time and between writers/researchers. The researcher decided that the term SEN will be used throughout this document, despite the original authors' choice of term. Exceptions to this will be when the history of SEN is examined, where original terminology will be used as it is perceived by the researcher that it reflects the dominant attitude of society at the time. Governing principles held by society are deemed important to explain the basis on which decisions about placement for children with SEN were made. It is acknowledged that by present society values this will involve the use of contentious language, likely to be regarded as offensive.

In exploring the background to this research, it is important to consider the types of placement, educational or otherwise, that children with SEN have historically experienced. By looking at how past placements were organised and informed, it is hoped to further understanding of current practice. This is in keeping with the constructivist epistemological position which the researcher has taken. A constructivist epistemology may presume that dominant ideas about SEN at a point in

time, specified by leaders of society, will be reflected in social and political frameworks. These would affect the placement afforded to those children with SEN. This refers to the impact of the macrosystems on the microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Historically, educational or non-educational placement for children with SEN presents as a complex issue. The past response towards education for children with SEN was one of segregation and/or isolation, for example in asylums. Placement in an asylum meant a child had little or no contact with children not considered to have SEN or with children with SEN different to their own. The education provided in the asylums was limited and the majority of attendants failed to secure employment once they had left (Warnock, 1978). The type of placement a child with SEN attended often depended upon the category of need in which they were placed and the label applied to them.

In the early 1700s, children with visual and hearing SEN were commonly placed in asylums which focused on making a profit; by the late 1700s, they also offered a minimal education (Warnock, 1978). Emergence of less segregated placements for children with a visual SEN came in the late 1800s. The 1893 Elementary Education (school attendance) Act stated that it was compulsory for blind children to be in educational placement from 5 to 16 years. It was advised that, where possible, they should be placed in a mainstream school until the age of 12 and thereafter follow a training or academic course. This Act also stated that it was compulsory for deaf children to be in an educational placement from 7 to 16 years but advised that this should be separate from mainstream education. At this time, some children with visual and hearing SEN were placed in 'special classes' within a mainstream school and, to varying degrees, the children were socialised into the mainstream section of the school (Warnock, 1978).

In the 1700s, those children whose SEN were mental health-related were placed in workhouses, in inhumane conditions, if they were deemed able to work or, if not, in infirmaries. In the late 1800s, three categories of mental health SEN arose which were 'feeble-minded, imbeciles and idiots' (Royal Commission Report on the Blind and Deaf, 1889). At this time, it was recommended by the government that those categorised as 'feeble-minded' be placed in separate provision and receive 'special

education'; those categorised as 'imbeciles' should be placed in a separate provision which concentrated upon sensory, physical and speech development; and those categorised as 'idiots' were not thought to be 'educable' and it appears that no placement recommendation was provided. Subsequently, in the 1899 Elementary Education (Defective and Epileptic Children) Act, and then the Balfour Education Act (1902), it was recommended that those categorised as 'feeble-minded' should be placed in 'special classes' in mainstream schools on the condition that a medical officer, appointed by the mainstream school, could conduct a physical examination of a child to determine if the child's needs could be met in the placement.

In the mid 1800s, the first placements, then called institutions, were offered to children whose SEN was physical disability and these focused on trade (Warnock, 1978). By the late 1800s, children who were physically 'handicapped' with 'normal intelligence' were placed in a mainstream school. Children who had epilepsy, who fitted at intervals of a month or more, were placed in mainstream schools and those who fitted more frequently were placed in residential special schools (Defective and Epileptic Children Act, 1896; Elementary Education, 1899; The Balfour Education Act, 1902).

It could be argued that the regular change in government legislation pertaining to placement of children with SEN reflects the complexity and subjectivity of the issue. The dominant thoughts about placement of children with SEN during the 1700s - 1800s, reflected in government legislation, seem to stem from a medical model of disability. At the time, SEN was deemed to be predominantly physical in origin and sometimes 'treatable' or curable through medical intervention but, if not, the child was segregated from their peers. SEN was seen as intrinsic to a child and context adaptation was not considered.

The 1913 Mental Deficiency Committee advocated a change in attitude towards 'special classes' by suggesting that they were a helpful variation of mainstream school. The committee gave the responsibility to local authorities to determine if a child with mental health-related SEN could attend a 'special class', instead of it being the school's medical officer's responsibility.

In the early 1900s, category of 'maladjusted' was identified (behavioural, social and emotional difficulties). In 1913, the London County Council appointed the first Educational Psychologist, Cyril Burt, to 'examine' children who were categorised as 'maladjusted'. However, this category was not recognised by local authorities at the time as an SEN; as a result, minimal provision was made for them.

The 1918 Education Act made educational placement compulsory for all recognised categories of SEN; however, at this time, provision for these children was often run by charities and included open air schools, schools in hospitals and trade schools (Warnock, 1978). Subsequently, the 1944 Education Act and the 1948 Human Rights Declaration both advocated that all children have a right to an education. The 1944 Education Act stated that local authorities were required to meet the needs of children with SEN through special educational 'treatment', meaning provision. It stated that those children with 'less serious' SEN could be educated in mainstream classes and the local authority was given the duty of deciding which children required special educational provision, and to provide placements for those who were considered 'educable'. This was reported to have led to a dramatic increase in the number of special schools and pupils in them between 1945 and 1955. In this period, several new boarding homes were made available for 'maladjusted' pupils (Warnock, 1978).

The Handicapped Pupils and School Health Service Regulations (1945) developed 11 categories of SEN and provided local authorities with placement decision guidance for each category of need. This guidance gave consideration to severity of need when making placement decisions, not just category of need. This is summarised below:

Table 1 Handicapped Pupils and School Health Regulations (1945) Guidance on Category of Need and Placement

SEN	Placement
Blind	Segregated residential special school.
Deaf	Segregated residential special school.
Partially Blind	Segregated residential/day special school or a mainstream school with support.
Partially Deaf	Segregated residential/day special school or a mainstream school with support.
Delicate	Temporarily segregated in hospital, open air day schools or residential boarding schools.
Diabetic	Mainstream school with the option of being accommodated in a hospital to receive treatment.
Educationally Subnormal	Majority attend mainstream schools and were taught in small groups with sympathetic teachers. It stated that these children should not be isolated from their mainstream peers.
Epileptic	Segregated residential special school.
Maladjusted	Placement determined by assessment by an EP or appropriate professional. Placement may be a mainstream school with specialist advice given to the teacher, periods of specialist teaching in a separate setting, attendance at another mainstream setting, segregated specialist school or a residential specialist school.
Physically handicapped	Segregated special school
Speech Defect	Treated in clinics whilst attending a mainstream school.

(Warnock, 1978, chapter 2, 2.45 – 2.48)

In 1955, the government appointed committee reported upon medical, educational and social aspects of children categorised as ‘maladjusted’, and advocated that they should lead a life as similar to those in mainstream schools as possible. These requirements lead to the government supporting an increase in the number of ‘special day schools’ and ‘special classes’ within mainstream schools. The 1971 Education Act directed local authorities to assume responsibility for the education placement of

children who had mental health-related SEN. These children, previously placed in training centres, transferred to be educated in 'special schools' and 'special classes'.

During the 1970s, an increased importance was placed on multi-agency assessment of a child with SEN, as well as parental involvement, to decide on placement and provision. By 1974, EPs were employed in Child Guidance Clinics in multi-professional teams, providing assessment, diagnosis, consultation, treatment and help as needed by the child, their parents or other professionals supporting the child.

Much government legislation from 1900–1974 appeared to operate in a medical model of disability and saw SEN as 'problems' within the child, ignoring the effects of the systems around the child. Further information pertaining to this is detailed in Chapter 2: Literature Review. When examining the historical placement experiences of children with SEN, the connection between the dominant thinking behind government commissioned reports/research, political legislation, and the treatment of children with SEN is evident.

1.8 Summary of Chapter 1

Here, important terms used in the research have been defined, the context, origins and aims of the research reported and epistemological stance and theoretical underpinnings presented. The historical experience of placement of children with SEN has been discussed and framed in the constructivist epistemological underpinning of this research. This study aimed to explore EP and parental perceptions of dual educational placement. As it is an under-researched area, it is deemed that an initial tentative exploration is preferable to unpick areas of interest that may, at a later stage, be of benefit to research in greater depth.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.0 Literature Review

In this chapter, an explanation of the literature review process and the discoveries from it are provided. Following this, Inclusion is discussed and theories about it offered. Knowledge with regards to educational placement of children with SEN and dual educational placements are then presented and evaluated, including the findings of the systematic literature reviews.

2.1 Approach to the Review of Relevant Literature

A systematic literature review pertaining to the area of dual educational placements was conducted. A systematic literature review has been defined as 'a systematic, explicit and reproducible method of identifying, evaluating and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners' (Frink, 2005, p3). This became problematic for the researcher as search terms most relevant to this research, such as dual educational placements, yielded only produced only literature that was loosely related to the topic. Therefore, a less stringent version of a systematic literature review was undertaken using Athens search engine. As has been previously identified in Chapter 1, the education system appears to be continuously changing in response to dominant values represented in political documentation; therefore, the researcher chose to confine the literature search to articles published after 2000, to increase the likelihood that findings will be relevant to the current educational system. Articles pertaining to research not conducted in the UK were also excluded as this research focuses on the UK education system. However, due to limited findings from the systematic literature review for dual educational placements, the researcher decided that, as long as a substantial portion of the research had been conducted in the UK, it would be considered. The inclusion criteria were any articles relating to educational placement of children with SEN. Nineteen terms were used to search for journal articles although four terms provided the articles applicable to this research. Some articles arose from more than one search term. From the systematic literature review findings, the researcher read the article abstracts and selected, on the basis of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, articles to be read thoroughly for inclusion in this research. Please refer to appendix 1 for full details of the exclusion and inclusion

criteria, search terms used, number of abstracts read and titles of articles identified as most relevant and read in full. Here is a summary table of the most successful search terms and number of relevant articles found:

Table 2 Systematic Literature Review Search Terms and Number of Articles Found

Search Term	Number of full-text articles read
Combination educational placement	1
Split school provision	1
Split educational provision	1
Split educational placement	4
Total	7

The table below depicts how the researcher categorised the eight articles into topics which broadly related to educational placement of children with SEN:

Table 3 Topics of Journal Articles Identified in Systematic Literature Review

No of articles	Topic
1	Inclusion review
1	Dual educational placements for nursery age children with SEN: parents perspectives
3	Views of children/adults with SEN about educational placement
1	Teachers perception of educational placement of children with SEN
1	Professional's perspectives on inclusion and alternative placements

As highly relevant results were limited using the systematic literature review method, a Google scholar search was also undertaken using the search terms 'dual educational placement' and 'split educational placement'. This provided one unpublished undergraduate dissertation pertaining to dual educational placements.

Subsequent to the above literature search, a further two literature searches were undertaken using the same inclusion and exclusion criteria but, in addition, narrowing the search to parents' perspectives and then Educational Psychologist's perspectives.

Again, the results of this literature search were minimal and the majority of the findings related to evaluation of inclusion programmes within a specific local authority context or a specific SEN: therefore, they did not report the broad participant perspectives about inclusion and alternative educational placements that were of interest and relevance to this research. It is possible that, by extending the search criteria to outside the UK and prior to 2000, a greater number of journals would be available. However, the researcher felt that this would compromise its relevance to the research being undertaken. Using the same selection process as described above, two parent journal articles and one EP journal article relating to their perspectives of inclusion and alternative education were identified. It is acknowledged by the researcher that parent and EP perceptions of a child with SEN's experience of attending either a mainstream or alternative educational placement alone may not be usefully comparable with perceptions of them attending a dual educational placement as the key 'dual' aspect is missing. Therefore, this aspect will be considered briefly. Please refer to appendices 2 and 3 for full details of the exclusion and inclusion criteria, search terms used, number of abstracts read and titles of articles identified as most relevant and read in full.

2.2 Inclusion

Inclusion is critical to the debate regarding appropriate educational placement for children with SEN. It is likely that the values that a person holds about inclusion, their interpretation of what it is and the belief in its achievability will influence where they perceive a child with SEN is best placed to receive an education (Croll and Moses, 2000). However, inclusion appears to be a multi-dimensional and subjective concept (Dyson, 2005). Inclusion has also been posited as a process (Barton, 1998). The Education and Skills Committee (2006) stated that there is considerable confusion over the term inclusion, with a wide range of meanings applied to it. .

In line with the constructivist epistemological position the researcher has taken here, it might be claimed that one's perception about whether or not a child with SEN is experiencing inclusion will vary, depending on an individual's construct of inclusion. A basic definition of inclusion given by Fredrickson, Miller and Cline (2008) is that:

‘Inclusion involves educating children with SEN in mainstream schools with ‘normally’ developing peers, rather than in separate special schools or classes’ (Fredrickson, Miller and Cline, 2008, p.67).

It appears that inclusion has and continues to concern political leaders and, in turn, Children’s Services. Following sections of this chapter will discuss this issue in greater detail because, in line with the constructivist epistemological position taken in this research, it is thought that individual constructs about inclusion will have been influenced by dominant constructs at a point in time.

2.3 Warnock Report (1978) and Education Act (1981)

The Warnock Report, commissioned by the government, was published in 1978. This committee was set up due to concern that segregated education placements for children with SEN was not affording them effective social and educational opportunities commonly found in inclusive/mainstream placements (Shah, 2007). The Warnock Report (1978) noted that in 1977, in England and Wales, 1.8% of the school population were placed in education facilities segregated from mainstream settings. Also, approximately 40% of mainstream schools incorporated ‘special classes’ where children with SEN spent the majority of their time and were not being incorporated into the mainstream section of the school.

The Warnock Report (1978) is reported to have been influential in initial thinking about an inclusive education system; it coined the term ‘integration’ which was defined as children with SEN being educated alongside their peers in a mainstream educational environment (Shah, 2007). The Warnock Report (1978) made 225 recommendations: the most relevant to educational placement of children with SEN are highlighted here. The Warnock Report advocated the abolition of the categories of handicaps and proposed to replace them with the now commonly-used term ‘special educational need’ (SEN). SEN was viewed as a continuum which aimed to afford greater attention to the provision a child requires to access education successfully, in relation to a child’s individual needs. The Warnock Report (1978) attempted to ‘normalise’ SEN by stating that up to 1 in 5 children, at some point during their school career, will benefit from some form of special educational

provision. It is posited that a focus of the Warnock Report (1978) was to de-escalate the division between pupils with SEN and others and brought inclusion to the forefront of the political agenda (Wedell, 2008). Warnock (1978) emphasises that, when catering for the educational needs of children classified as having SEN, placement in itself, be it alternative or mainstream school, is not the key. Instead focus should be on the conditions which are required for the child to receive education successfully, regardless of the setting in which they are placed. The report states that:

‘The purpose of education for all children is the same; the goals are the same. But the help that individual children need in progressing towards them will be different’

It continued by elaborating that:

‘special education. . . extends beyond the idea of education provided in special schools, special classes or units for children with particular types of disability, and embraces the notion of any form of additional help. . . to overcome educational difficulty’ (Warnock, 1978, Chapter 1, 1.10).

The Warnock Report (1978) also advocated maximum educational and social interaction between a child with SEN and mainstream peers when attending a mainstream school, and for firm links between special and mainstream schools in the same area.

The 1981 Education Act followed the Warnock Report (1978) and was considered the legislative backbone to the report. These documents acted as catalysts for debate relating to educational placement for children with SEN, and as a framework for the further development of inclusion. The 1981 Education Act advised that, where possible, children with SEN should be educated in mainstream schools (DfES, 1981). This was then referred to as an ‘integrative approach’ and is now referred to as inclusion. Norwich (2008) suggested that the movement to educate children with SEN with their peers was underpinned by a continuum of provision/placement from most separate to most inclusive. It can be observed that a dual educational placement was considered as third on the continuum. Norwich (2008) proposed the following continuum of special education provision:

Table 4 Continuum of Special Education Provision (Norwich, 2008)

Most separate	
1	Full time residential special school
2	Full time day special school
3	Part time special –part time ordinary school (dual educational placement)
4	Full time special unit or class in ordinary school
5	Part time special unit/class – part time ordinary class
5	Full time in ordinary class with some withdrawal and some in-class support
7	Full time in ordinary class with in-class support
8	Full time in ordinary class
Most Included	

(Source: Adapted from, Norwich, 2008, p.136)

In line with the recommendations in the Warnock Report (1978) and the 1981 Education Act, the Statement of Special Educational Needs was introduced, with one aim of supporting an ‘integrative approach’. This allowed LEAs to develop a system of recording children’s category of SEN, following assessment by a multi agency team of professionals, so that the LEA could determine appropriate educational placement for them. Advice from EPs to contribute to this multi-agency assessment process has been an integral part of their professional role since that time.

It has been suggested that ‘in reality the ‘integration’ of students deemed to have SEN, into the mainstream schools, was not pursued even to the limited extent envisaged by the designers of the 1981 Education Act legislation’ (Jones, 2003). Lack of expected change in the education of those with SEN has been associated with lack of finance: the 1981 Education Act did not provide additional funding for the statement process or additional training for teachers in mainstream schools, despite the closures of many special educational provisions (Jones, 2003). Norwich (2008) reported that, from 1983–2000, there had been a decrease in the percentage of children attending special schools from 1.87% to 1.2 or 1.3%, but that this percentage had remained stable from 2000 until 2008.

2.4 Inclusion Policy and Practice After the Warnock Report (1978)

Policies about 'integration' and subsequently about 'inclusion' have been the subject of much debate (Wedell, 2008). After the Warnock Report (1978), several policy developments and amendments preceded influencing practice to varying degrees. Dyson and Slee (2001) perceived an increase in consideration among professionals and policy makers of the 'rights of the child' to an inclusive education. This was reflected in the 1988 Education Act which established the National Curriculum and emphasised the importance of 'access' to the curriculum for children with SEN (Dyson and Slee, 2001). This was later endorsed in general terms by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1990 which stated the right to education for all.

The 1993 Education Act further supported inclusion and, additionally, the involvement of parents in decisions about placement of their child. The 1993 Education Act is reported to have stated that:

'Children with SEN should – where this is what parents wanted – normally be educated at mainstream schools' (DfES, Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs, 2001, p.1).

The 1993 Education Act also established SEN tribunals, which were intended to be independent of both local and national government, to enable parents to appeal against decisions made by LEAs in England about their child's education, including which educational placement. The importance of parents' involvement in, and contribution to, identification and assessment of their child's needs, as well as placement decisions, began to receive greater recognition.

A duty for the government to develop a SEN code of practice, which was published in 1994, was also stated in the 1993 Education Act. This document gave practical guidance to Local Authorities and the governing bodies of all maintained schools about their responsibilities for all children with SEN. All schools were asked to publish their SEN policies and appoint a SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO) on their staff.

Following this, in 1994, the right to education for all was elaborated on at the world conference on SEN, specifically by the UNESCO Salamanca Statement. This presented the need to work towards 'schools for all', where a single institution can include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning and respond to individual needs. Here, it was considered that fundamental policy shifts were required to achieve this. The Salamanca Statement (1994) called on governments to:

'Adopt, as a matter of law or policy, the principles of inclusive education enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise' (UNESCO, 1994, p.9)

It is perceived by the researcher that, between the 1978 Warnock Report and the 1994 UNESCO Salamanca Statement, there was a fundamental shift in the underlying thinking behind the concept of 'integration' or inclusion. The Warnock Report (1978) suggested that, if a mainstream placement provides the optimum conditions for meeting a child's SEN, the children should be educated there; by 1994, in the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, the concept was placed in the emotive framework of human rights.

In 1997, the government published the Green Paper named 'Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs' which called on LEAs to:

'Adopt the principle of inclusive education'

and

'A progressive extension of the capacity of mainstream schools to provide for children with a wide range of needs' (DfEE, 1997, p.45)

After the Warnock Report (1978), a decline in the number of children attending special schools and an increase in the numbers of children identified as having SEN and a Statement of Special Educational Need was observed. This continued until 1999–2000 when it is reported to have stabilised (Education and Skills Committee: Special Educational Needs, 2006).

The Special Educational Needs Code of practice was subsequently amended in 2001 in light of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA, 2001). This aimed to reinforce the government's commitment to the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools, and to ensure protection against discrimination on the grounds of disability in schools and other educational establishments. SENDA (2001) prohibited schools from discriminating against disabled children in their admission arrangements and in relation to exclusions from school. It stated the requirement for schools to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that a child's SEN are met and to ensure they can be included within the mainstream school environment. DfES (2001) statutory guidance, called *Inclusive Schooling: Children with SEN*, stated that:

'Where parents want mainstream education for their child, everything possible should be done to provide it. Equally, where parents want a special school place, their wishes should be listened to and taken into account' (DfES, 2001, p.3).

This document also advocated dual educational placement. It stated:

'The appropriate use of dual placements – where a child can attend more than one school – can support inclusion. It can help prepare pupils for mainstream and prepare schools to meet the child's needs. Dual placements can also allow children time away from their mainstream school for specialist or catch up support' (DfES, 2001, p.25).

In 2003, the government published a green paper called 'Every Child Matters'. Although the catalyst for the paper was not directly related to placement of children with SEN, the details targeted relevant issues. It suggested that all Children's Services should aim to improve well-being outcomes for children in the five areas of: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being; as a consequence to this, mainstream schools found they had to broaden their curriculum to target these five outcomes (Wedell, 2008). The 2004 Children's Act provided legislative support for the 'Every Child Matters' green paper. In 2004, the government published documents as frameworks for supporting 'Every Child Matters' (2003) and Children's Act (2004) including 'Every

Child Matters: Next Steps' and 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children', the latter of which contained the government's ten year SEN strategy, 'Removing Barriers to Achievement'. These documents set out the government's vision for education of children with SEN and disability, as well as increased financial investment in SEN. The documents stated that all teachers should expect to teach children with SEN and schools should play their part in the education of children from their local community, whatever their background or ability. Some of the most relevant aims of this framework were to ensure that inclusive practice is embedded in all schools, and that teachers have the skills and strategies to meet the needs of children with SEN. It also encouraged sections of Children's Services to work collaboratively to meet the needs of children and their families. The 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' (2004) document stated that:

'We want to break down the divide between mainstream and special schools to create a unified system, where all schools and their pupils are included within the wider community of schools' (DfES, 2004, p38).

Education policy has also been subject to disability discrimination legislation, namely the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 and subsequently the Disability and Equality Act 2010. These Acts broadly aim to protect disabled people and prevent disability discrimination. With specific regard to children with SEN, they required schools not to treat disabled pupils less favourably than others and to take reasonable steps to avoid putting disabled pupils at a substantial disadvantage.

In 2005, Baroness Warnock published Special Educational Needs: A New Look, which has been described by some critics as a u-turn in her strategy on inclusion (Barton, 2005). In this document, Warnock stated that the 'government's policy on inclusion and SEN was not working and the concept of inclusion and provision for children labelled as having SEN needed reviewing'. Some other points relevant to this research, made by Warnock (2005), were:

- the idea of inclusion should be re-thought because many children educated in mainstream schools are not included at all;

- inclusion in practice often means being physically included but emotionally excluded;
- children with SEN should only be catered for in mainstream schools when they can be supported from schools' own resources;
- small specialist school provision is needed.

In a document entitled 'Government's response to the Education and Skills Committee Report of SEN' (2006), a reaction to Warnock's (2005) recommendations and opinions were given. This document stated that the government perceived it was not in the best interests of children with SEN to review the SEN education system at the time. It recommended that Children's Service workers persevere with the previously recommended strategies given by the government in the document Removing Barriers to Achievement of 2004. In the Education and Skills Committee Report of SEN (2006), the government did, however, place greater responsibility on local authorities to meet the educational needs of children with SEN. They stated that they considered inclusion to be about quality of experience which enabled progress in learning and full participation in school and community activities - thereby providing no further detail about the placement in which inclusion can be achieved. The details of the document did, however, provide support for dual educational placements as a means of meeting the needs of children with SEN, by suggesting that this could be achieved through:

'Local authorities developing a flexible continuum of provision to meet the wide range of children's SEN and use of the flexibilities.... to facilitate dual placements in mainstream and special provision where appropriate, to meet the needs of individual children with statements of SEN' (Government response to the Education and Skills Committee report on SEN, 2006, p.26)

In March 2011, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government published the SEN Green Paper entitled 'Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability – A Consultation'. In this paper, the government intimates that prior political legislation which promotes inclusion in the

most basic sense (educating children with SEN in mainstream schools with ‘normally’ developing peers, rather than in separate special schools or classes) may have been counterproductive to providing individually appropriate placement options for children and their parents. The Green Paper (DfE, 2011) proposes:

*‘...to give parents a real choice of school, either mainstream or special. We will **remove the bias towards inclusion** and propose to strengthen parental choice by improving the range and diversity of schools from which parents can choose, making sure they are aware of the options available to them.’ (DfE, 2011, p.8 and p.18)*

Proposals in the Green Paper (DfE, 2011) suggest that parents should have the choice of having their child placed in a mainstream or special school. Additional information in the paper clarified that the education system should be able to respond flexibly to parental choice through delivery of a diverse and dynamic school system. It would therefore appear that there is continued opportunity for dual educational placements to remain as a valuable option available to parents if they believed that it would meet their child’s SEN. The option of dual educational placement seemed to have secured support, although not stated explicitly in the Green Paper (2011), seen from the following section:

‘Flexible placements in more than one type of provision, over time or simultaneously, can be beneficial for children with SEN’ (DfE, 2011, p.71)

Criticism has been voiced over governmental policies on inclusion, past and present, for being based predominantly on value- and moral-driven constructs, rather than research evidence of its success (Croll and Moses, 2000; Lindsay, 2007). Lindsay (2007) proposed that the government’s drive for inclusion is based on a concern that children’s human rights are being breached by attending alternative placements; however, he also argued that effectiveness of an educational placement should be determined through research evidence and cannot be assumed because it is a morally comfortable position to take. Lindsay (2007) conducted a review of the literature on the effectiveness of inclusive education carried out over the last few decades and was not able to identify any clear evidence for the positive effects of inclusion. Despite the limitations of Lindsay’s (2007) literature review, namely that it

focused only on educational outcomes of children with SEN and was taken from just fourteen journal articles, questions are raised regarding the evidence base on which the government are basing their policies on inclusion and educational placement. However, some academics appear unconcerned that inclusion may not be research driven but is instead a product of human rights. It has been proposed that any research evidence of negative outcomes of inclusion should be rejected as a fault of the current education system and/or used to develop policy to improve inclusion (Rustemier, 2002).

Despite government legislation previously advocating inclusion, accusation has been made that there is minimal existing information, for those who have the duty to implement inclusion, about how to put it into practice (Croll and Moses, 2000). Croll and Moses (2000) conducted a qualitative, interview investigation into the thoughts of professionals, including local education officers and head teachers from mainstream and special schools, about educational placement of children with SEN, inclusion/mainstream and alternative placement. In line with the findings from Lindsay's (2007) literature review presented above, Croll and Moses (2000) found that participants perceived inclusion as being a morally correct educational option for children with SEN. However, Croll and Moses (2000) stated that they regularly found tension in participant's responses to placement decisions, in that inclusion was what participants desired but currently saw as a distant aspiration and, in the meantime, pragmatic influences, such as accessibility and access to resources, were taken into consideration alongside the ideology of inclusion. Croll and Moses (2000) concluded that, overall, their professional participants demonstrated support for inclusion as an ideal but expressed reservations about feasibility. They noted that, at the time of the research, the overriding factor influencing perspectives about educational placements was a child's individual needs and a desire to meet those needs with the resources currently available, be it in a mainstream or alternative placement (Croll and Moses, 2000). It is claimed by Croll and Moses (2000) that one benefit of having special school provision is that it responds to the deficits of mainstream educational placements.

The research conducted by Croll and Moses (2000) provides important insight into the challenges faced by those expected to implement inclusion, when there is a gap

between government policy on inclusion, and research evidence to inform delivery of an effective inclusive education. However, it should be noted that Croll and Moses' (2000) research was conducted approximately ten years ago and it could be that many of the tensions experienced by participants have been resolved by guidelines published by the government since this time. The next section will further explore how beliefs and models of thinking about SEN can influence perception about the value of inclusion and alternative placements. Then, professional and stakeholder accounts of the benefits and limitations of inclusive and segregated educational placements over the last ten years will be considered.

2.5 Theories of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion

A lot can be learnt about day-to-day practice from exploring theories of SEN and inclusion, presented by influential academics and politicians. It is suggested, in this research, that leading constructs of SEN will affect treatment of children with SEN, such as placement decisions and placement choices for children with SEN. Oliver (1988) thought that, initially, disability was perceived as an individual problem; it then came to be seen as a social construction and, finally, it is beginning to be perceived as a social creation.

It would appear that, prior to the Warnock Report (1978), the medical model was the dominant construct affecting the attitudes of society towards children with SEN. The medical model, as it is currently understood, views SEN as a result of a physical condition or sensory and/or neurological impairment due to damage or disease, which is intrinsic to an individual and can be diagnosed (Runswick-Cole, 2008). It is suggested that children were assessed using a deficit model which determined how 'deviant' they were from the norms of society (Runswick-Cole, 2008). The medical model advocates curing or managing SEN through surgery or drug treatment to 'normalise' the individual to fit societal expectations (Runswick-Cole, 2008). At this point in time, common practice was that those deemed incurable were segregated from the rest of society in an asylum, workhouse or a special school (Clough and Corbett, 2010). The theoretical underpinning of the medical model can also be identified in the Elementary Education Act (1896) which suggested that a medical officer employed by a mainstream school could conduct a physical examination of a

child with SEN to determine if they could attend the school. Contextually, common practice was that, if a child could not adapt to a school environment with minimal to no disruption, they experienced segregated or no education. This thinking may also be comparable to Social Darwinian Theory: 'survival of the fittest'.

In the early 1900s, an increasing influence of the behaviourist theoretical perspective can be identified, proposing that a child could be 'rehabilitated' to transfer back to mainstream with provision of individual attention (Clough and Corbett, 2010). Behaviourist theorists still maintained a within child deficit model but argued that, through behaviourist techniques (such as operant conditioning used in professional practice by those in Child Guidance Clinics at this time), behaviour could be modified to adapt to society's norms and, as a result, children could be educated in mainstream schools. It may be implied that, though not yet labelled as such, the behaviourist theoretical perspective provided the platform for the concept of inclusion to develop.

It seems that until the 1970s, SEN was identified within child: arising from children's own characteristics and taking no account of context (Ysseldyke, 1987). In the 1970s, sociologists in particular, to varying degrees, began thinking of SEN as having social constructionist origins (Vsseldyke, 1987). However, some sociologists suggested that a number of professionals, for example medical and psychological, may have had a vested interest in the institutional reproduction of disadvantage in maintaining their own status and power (Clough and Corbett, 2010; Tomlinson, 1982). Tomlinson (1982) argued that the answer to the question 'what is' a child with SEN depends more on the values and beliefs and interests of those making the judgement than on the qualities intrinsic to the child.

The Warnock Report (1978) seemed to deviate from a purely within child deficit model of SENs by addressing the context in which the child learns, and appeared to take a more holistic and systemic view of SEN. The report proposed that whether a 'disability' constitutes an 'educational handicap' for a child depended on factors such as the school's expertise and resources, the child's temperament and personality, and the quality of support and encouragement within the family and environment (Warnock, 1978). Warnock (1978) also suggested an 'integrated approach' whereby

children with SEN would be educated alongside their peers in mainstream provision, where it was believed possible. It appears that these concepts then evolved into the current terminology of inclusion. In mainstream educational provision, adaptations of classroom approach began, as did change in ideas about 'how children learn' for example, recognition that ability is not innate and static (Ainscow and Tweddle, 1979). Allen (1996 and 1999) held the belief that disability and inclusion are socially constructed. She argued that evidence for this is that pupils with SEN will often transcend the boundaries placed on them by others (Allen, 1996 and 1999).

The Warnock Report (1978) appeared to give consideration to the social model of disability. The model's theoretical underpinning is the belief that it is 'society's' failure to take into consideration individual difference which leads to exclusion of, some members and labelling children as having SEN. As previously mentioned Warnock (1978) attempted to de-escalate the division between those 'with' and 'without' SEN; for example, by explaining SEN as a continuum and focussing attention on need rather than deficit.

Barton (1998) suggested that SEN has been used as a method of control and a legitimate way of selecting and removing people from various roles in society, on the basis that it is in their best interests. He is said to have assumed a socio-political perspective of inclusion and SEN, proposing that they can be viewed as political issues due to their connections with inequalities in society. Barton (1998) stated:

'For me inclusive education is not an end in itself, it is a means to an end and that end is creating an inclusive society'. (Clough and Corbett, 2010, p.16)

This perspective can be likened to that of disability critics who link educational inclusion with social inclusion and inclusion in employment and housing. A quote from Colin Barnes (1990) encapsulates this thinking:

'The need for radical reappraisal for societal attitudes and social policies regarding children and young people with impairments has never been more acute. Existing policies which successfully disable children and adults with impairments by not providing them with confidence, practical and intellectual skills, and opportunities

necessary to live outside institutional settings are no longer morally reprehensible, they are likely to prove economically disastrous'. (Barnes, 1990, p.203 cited in Clough and Corbett, 2010, p.49)

2.6 Parent's Views on Inclusion and Alternative Placements

Emphasis on supporting parental choice and decision making is evident in the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (revised) which promotes working in partnership with parents (DfES, 2001b). The importance of parent input in decision making about their child's education placement and the provision they should receive has since been stressed to a much greater extent in the Coalition Government's green consultation paper named 'Support and Aspiration: a new approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability' (DfE, 2011). The document advocates greater parental choice and control over the support and educational placements to which their child has access. Therefore, learning about and understanding parents' views will be important for the future in meeting the needs of children with SEN.

A study carried out by Runswick-Cole (2008) investigated parent's attitudes to the placement of their children with SEN in mainstream and alternative schools, in the context of a medical or social model of disability. Data was gathered for this research via interviews with twenty-four parents of children who had SEN. All parents had involvement with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST) for a variety of reasons, including thirteen parents who wanted to secure either mainstream or alternative educational placement for their children.

Runswick-Cole (2008) found that those parents whose internal model of disability most resembled the medical and individualised model of disability were, in practice, more likely to choose an alternative placement. It was also reported that those parents who identified with a social model of disability wished to pursue a mainstream placement for their child. The latter parents placed greater emphasis on contextual barriers to learning. It was also noted that those parents who initially perceived mainstream educational placement as most desirable for their child often changed to preferring an alternative placement for pragmatic reasons, such as access to additional resources and specialist support, rather than due to a shift in their belief of

the model of disability from a social model to a medical model. This latter point supports the suggestion made by Oliver (1988) that current constructs of SEN recognise limitations imposed by context and society, rather than within the individual. It also reflects the findings by Croll and Moses (2000) of the tension experienced by professionals between the moral advantage of inclusion/mainstream placement and pragmatic benefits of an alternative placement. Runswick-Cole's (2008) research is also one illustration of how dominant theoretical underpinnings, communicated through popular academic and political mediums, can affect reality for a child with SEN in terms of mainstream or alternative educational placement.

Fredrickson, Dunsmuir, Lang and Monsen (2004) also investigated parents' perspectives on mainstream and special education. One-hundred and seven parents of children who had been part of an inclusion project took part in the research. The inclusion project involved integration of the children into mainstream schools after previously attending a special school. Parents' perspectives were collected through interview and focus group methodology, and were analysed qualitatively to identify commonalities and differences.

Fredrickson, Dunsmuir, Lang and Monsen's (2004) suggested that there were academic and social advantages and disadvantages to their children being placed in a mainstream setting. The greatest concern expressed was about higher incidence of their child being bullied within a mainstream setting. However, it was also reported that they perceived the mainstream setting had a positive impact on the development of their child's social interactions skills. Parents felt that their children learnt from copying the social competencies of children without SEN in the mainstream setting and their social interactions skills were supported by pupils who were more able. Parents also expressed the opinion that the curriculum within a mainstream placement was able to challenge their child to a greater extent but they were concerned that, without proper differentiation and targeted teaching, their son or daughter might not be able to access lesson content. Overall, parents in Fredrickson, Dunsmuir, Lang and Monsen's (2004) study reported that thorough planning and effective communication are most valuable in supporting their child in a mainstream placement, and ensuring success. Parents noted that further consideration was needed regarding the physical environment, resources, organisation and teaching

methods in mainstream settings. They also thought the relationship between parents and school is important. This latter point may suggest that parents consider systemic factors of relationships between parents and school influence whether they perceive a mainstream setting as a viable option for their child. It would appear that parents in this study presented the view of a social model of disability, in that inclusion was preferable and achievable through adaptations of the child's environment.

2.7 Educational Psychologists Views on Inclusion and Alternative placements

The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (revised) states that advice from EPs relating to a child's progress, and recommendations about support they may need, assist the local education authority in making decisions about what provision is most suitable for a child (2001b). This may suggest that, although EPs do not make decisions about where a child should be placed to receive their education, the advice they provide as an outcome of assessment is key to contributing to the decision making process. It may be of importance to research EPs' views on inclusion and alternative placements, for no other reason than to heighten their own awareness and to support them in being reflective practitioners who are able to override their own biases when providing psychological advice. Additionally, the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (revised) noted that EPs can help parents to increase their understanding of their children's individual needs and help them to adjust their response accordingly (DfES, 2001b). This may suggest that EPs have a key role in providing fact- and evidence-based information to parents about their child's needs, upon which they can make decisions.

Hardman and Worthington (2000) researched the attitudes of EPs towards inclusion. Data was gathered from 144 EPs, from 37 English local education authorities, and their inclination towards inclusion ascertained via the methodology of postal questionnaire. The researchers in this study used a quantitative approach to gaining the views of their participants by asking them read short vignettes about a child and to rate where they would place a child, giving the options of special school, mainstream unit, mainstream with support and mainstream. Participants were not provided with the children's category of need, only a description of their needs.

Hardman and Worthington (2000) found that, overall, the EPs demonstrated in their research a commitment to the education of children within a mainstream setting, and a positive attitude towards inclusion. This research reported that EPs thought that placement of a child within a mainstream setting with support was the most preferable provision for a range of descriptions of children's SEN. It was noted that mainstream placement with support was the preferred choice for children with physical difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties (Dyslexia), medical conditions, speech and language difficulties, mild learning difficulties and visual impairments. EP participants only stated that their preferred choice of placement was special school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. This research also highlighted the subjective nature of these decisions as it was found that, at times, EPs had made different placement choices about the same vignettes. The researchers hypothesised that this may be attributed to difference in their experiences of mainstream and special educational placements.

Overall, it was considered that the psychological theory of the social model of disability and a constructivist's epistemological position was evident in the EP participants' approach to inclusion.

2.8 Mainstream and Alternative Educational Placements

Is it 'best practice' for children with SEN to attend a mainstream educational placement or an alternative educational placement?

Fredrickson, Miller and Cline (2008) suggest that a mainstream educational placement is 'best practice'. They argued that inclusion, if defined as involving the education of children with SEN in mainstream schools with 'normally' developing peers, rather than in separate special schools or classes, is best practice. However, this concept of inclusion may be deemed too simplistic. Fredrickson, Miller and Cline's (2008) definition of inclusion appears similar to the definition of 'integration' proposed by Norwich (2008) which says that all children should be educated in the same environment. Norwich (2008) argues that inclusion is more complex than all children being educated in the same place and stated that it is about adapting the

environment to ensure children with SEN have the same social and educational opportunities afforded to children without SEN, and is not specifically about where they are placed. Warnock (2005) also rejected the idea that inclusion is about all children being educated together. She adopted a learning concept of inclusion and suggested that it should be about all children having the opportunity to learn, wherever they learn best.

Corbett (1998, 1996, 1992), previously a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, reflected on her own experiences of delivering an inclusive education and stated the following:

'I felt then as I do now that, at an ideological level, it is the right way to go as a society and that learners should have the choice of going into mainstream provision. However, I am fully conscious of the challenges it presents.....[students] often felt socially marginalised and some failed in the courses they attended, because the work was inappropriate for them'. (Clough and Corbett, 2010, p.72)

The above extract reflects the tensions identified by Croll and Moses (2000) discussed previously. It also makes reference to the contradiction which Norwich (2008) identified between meeting a child's individual needs and providing them with a sense of belonging. It was claimed that it is this 'dilemma' which contributes to the difficulty experienced by policy makers and educationalists implementing inclusive education.

In this following section, the debate pertaining to what is actually meant by inclusion will be momentarily put aside to explore the research concerning strengths and limitations of both mainstream and alternative educational placements. The researcher believes that these strengths and limitations may provide relevant information about the appeal of dual educational placements for some children with SEN. Findings will be presented from four journal articles identified as most relevant to this research during the literature review. The titles, authors and a short outline of the research of the four articles are as follows:

1. What future for special schools and inclusion? Conceptual and professional perspectives by Norwich (2008).

Norwich (2008) presented 'dilemmas' about providing a child with SEN a sense of belonging (assumed from a mainstream placement), and meeting their individual need (thought from an alternative placement), to 132 policy-maker and teacher participants. Data was collected from participants using a semi-structured interview methodology. Norwich (2008) asked participants to rate the 'dilemma' and explain their response. Themes were then identified from the data.

2. Special or mainstream? The views of disabled students by Shah (2007).

Shah (2007) conducted interviews with 30 disabled people, aged 13–25 years, attending alternative and mainstream educational placements, about their educational experiences and their placement preferences. Themes were then identified from the data.

3. Disabled and successful: education in the life stories of disabled high achievers by Shah, Travers and Arnold (2004).

These researchers carried out semi-structured interviews with 20 participants considered to be high achievers, who also have congenital disabilities, educated between 1950 and 1970 either in a mainstream or special institution, or having experience of both placements. Themes were then identified from the data.

4. Integration versus segregation: the experience of a group of disabled students moving from mainstream school into special needs further education by Pitt and Curtin (2004).

Pitt and Curtin (2004) conducted group and individual interviews with ten students, aged 17–21 years, who had physical disabilities and attended a residential further education college, to explore why they had moved away from mainstream education to complete further education. Themes were then identified pertaining to participants experiences of mainstream and alternative education.

For clarity, the findings from the four articles stated above will be reported in the next sections under four headings: strengths of a mainstream placement; limitations of a mainstream placement; strengths of an alternative placement; and limitations of an alternative placement.

2.8.1 Strengths of a Mainstream Placement

Previous research suggests that educating children with SEN at a mainstream placement is important for the development of a socially inclusive society (Giddens, 1997). The belief was expressed by education policy-makers and teachers educating children with SEN in a mainstream placement that it promotes acceptance of diversity (Norwich, 2008). Educating children with SEN in a mainstream placement has also been cited as a positive in reducing discrimination and developing a more inclusive society (Pitt and Curtin, 2004).

It was found that placement of children with SEN in a mainstream setting allowed them to establish social relationships with peers without SEN, which was reported to result in them 'feeling normal and forgetting their disability' (Pitt and Curtin, 2004; Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004). Participants in Pitt and Curtin's (2004) research are said to have stated that they saw education in a mainstream placement as essential preparation for the real world.

Aspiration benefits of attending a mainstream placement were also noted by participants in Shah, Travers and Arnold's (2004) study. These participants stated that they perceived attending a mainstream placement was motivational for them as they aimed to achieve the same as their non-disabled peers.

2.8.2 Limitations of a Mainstream Placement

It has been observed that there is little evidence to prove that children with SEN were accepted in mainstream placements; findings indicate that they may be socially isolated and rejected by peers without SEN (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). Educational policy-makers and teachers said that several disabled pupils can be

made to feel unwelcome by non-disabled peers and, as such, fail to make friends and feel excluded in a mainstream placement (Norwich, 2008). This is in line with the suggestion made by Warnock (2005) who stated that inclusion in practice often means that children are physically included but emotionally excluded. Buckton (2000) commented specifically on children with a diagnosis of Autism or Asperger Syndrome, saying that a mainstream placement does not always benefit a young person as the difficulties they have with social understanding will sometimes impact upon the quality of their mainstream experience.

In line with the above findings, all participants in Pitt and Curtin's (2004) research reported being socially isolated and lonely in a mainstream placement. Additionally, all participants reported being bullied at some point during their placement at the mainstream school. This included bullying by non-disabled peers as well as being treated negatively or differently by teaching staff (Pitt and Curtin, 2004). Warnock (2005) stated that bullying of children with SEN is inevitable in mainstream schools. Norwich (2008) also noted that poor teacher attitudes were identified as an obstacle to providing a mainstream placement for a child with SEN.

It was noted by children with SEN attending mainstream placement that the adult support they received often restricted their engagement with typical social activities with peers (Pitt and Curtin, 2004; Priestley, 1999; Shah, 2007). It was perceived that disabled students were expected to behave themselves at all times (Pitt and Curtin, 2004).

Shah (2007) found that participants reported a link between access limitations and feelings of isolation and loneliness in mainstream placements. Participants noted that poor accessibility of the mainstream school environment meant that they were not always able to participate in activities with peers not identified as having SEN (Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004; Shah, 2007) and it was suggested that this can be particularly evident at secondary education level (Pitt and Curtin, 2004).

It has also been proposed that children with SEN do not receive adequate support and teaching in a mainstream placement to meet their SEN, to provide an individualised and effective education. It has been suggested that staff within a

mainstream placement are not trained to support pupils with more complex SEN (Norwich, 2008). In line with this, Warnock (2005) reported that often children with SEN in mainstream placements have been taught almost entirely by teaching assistants who are not fully qualified and, therefore, they have not benefited from the best teaching. Participants in research conducted by Pitt and Curtin (2004) said that they experienced difficulties keeping up with the pace of school work in a mainstream placement, despite having one-to-one support.

In contradiction to the findings previously stated from the research by Pitt and Curtin (2004), which suggested being surrounded by non-disabled peers made those participants with SEN 'feel normal and forget about their disability', Shah, Travers and Arnold (2004) found that participants reported that the challenges presented to them in a mainstream school, in addition to being surrounded by non-disabled peers, served as a constant reminder to them of their disability.

2.8.3 Strengths of an Alternative Placement

Evidence from previous research carried out by Shah, Travers and Arnold (2004) concluded that an alternative placement offers a supportive environment in which to develop a positive self-identity and interact socially. They found that their participants attending an alternative educational placement benefited from positive disabled role models from whom they learnt how to overcome barriers to their education, and were able to develop friendships with others who they could identify with. In line with this, participants in the study conducted by Pitt and Curtin (2004) stated that, in the alternative placement, they felt more secure and accepted by their disabled peers than non-disabled peers. It was also identified that smaller classes in this type of placement meant that children did not have one to one support; therefore, they could mix socially with their peers and it was easier to build friendships and social networks (Pitt and Curtin, 2004, Shah, 2007).

It has been suggested that children with SEN prefer attending an alternative placement because staff present a more positive attitude towards them and afforded them greater independence (Norwich, 2008). This was reported by participants from Pitt and Curtin's (2004) research which identified that staff at the alternative

placement treated them more like adults, giving them more choice and independence. They also felt that staff had a better understanding of their needs (Pitt and Curtin, 2004).

Some participants reported that the alternative placement was the more academically supportive environment (Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004). A slower pace and greater differentiation of work were identified as beneficial aspects of an alternative placement (Pitt and Curtin, 2004; Shah, 2007).

Participants informed the researchers that specialist resources which could be accessed in an alternative placement - such as physiotherapy, speech therapy, swimming and hydrotherapy pools - were strengths of this context (Shah, 2007).

2.8.4 Limitations of an Alternative Placement

Despite some participants suggesting education as a strength of an alternative placement, as stated above, others noted a limited curriculum and low teaching standard as a drawback (Jenkinson, 1997; Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004). Shah (2007) found that some participants perceived teacher expectations of pupils were lower and they were provided with limited academic opportunities in an alternative placement.

Alternative placements were often reported to be a long distance from the homes of the pupils attending the placement and this was said to have four key negative effects: (1) making the children feel isolated from their local community; (2) they missed the opportunity of attending after school clubs due to being picked up by taxis or buses at a set time from the placement; (3) the long travelling distance meant they were often tired at school; and (4) they had less time in the evenings to complete their homework (Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004).

A further limitation of an alternative placement identified by Pitt and Curtin (2004) in their participants' responses was that being educated with other disabled peers served as a visual reminder that they too had a disability.

2.8.5 Implications of Research Literature on Educational Placement

The above findings further raise the debate about what is meant by an inclusive education. It has been suggested that inclusion can relate to social acceptance and instilling a sense of belonging (Norwich, 2008). Therefore, it may be argued that inclusion is not simply about being educated in a mainstream placement with 'normally' developing peers, rather than in a separate placement (Fredrickson, Miller and Cline, 2008). However, as reported above, education in a mainstream placement has often lead to social exclusion rather than inclusion of children with SEN (Fredrickson and Cline, 2002; Norwich, 2008; Pitt and Curtin, 2004; Shah, 2007; Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004 and Warnock, 2005). Farrell (2001) raised the question, 'to what extent is inclusion possible in a mainstream placement due to the social isolation experienced by pupils'? Shah (2007) stated that inclusion is more than educating a child with SEN with peers in a mainstream placement; it requires major changes to the school community and society to enable everyone to participate and interact. It is posited that, in line with a constructivist view, an individual's construction of inclusion will affect their perception of the viability of mainstream and alternative educational placements.

Disagreements were found in the research findings presented above. There were inconsistencies reported in the findings about which placement children with SEN benefit most from, educationally and socially. This seems to highlight that educational placement decisions should be responsive to individual needs. This suggests that individual differences between children with SEN should be considered when deciding which educational placement would best meet a child's SEN (Croll and Moses, 2000). Shah (2007) suggested that children with SEN should have the opportunity to attend mainstream or alternative placements, with decisions being made based on the child's individual strengths and limitations (Stinson and Lang, 1994).

As identified above, a number of benefits and limitations can be presented to support and challenge both mainstream and alternative placements as 'best practice'. It may be posited that educational provision, such as a dual educational placement, could offer an effective and accessible solution. Pitt and Curtin (2004) found in their participants' views that no individual mainstream or alternative placement could meet

the needs of all their disabled students throughout their academic careers. Shah, Travers and Arnold (2004) proposed that a combination of a mainstream and alternative placement may be needed to facilitate disabled students to develop psychologically, socially and cognitively at the rate of their non-disabled peers, and stated 'this can be perceived as combining the best of both worlds'.

Norwich (2008) postulated that the current one-dimensional continuum used to place children in education, whereby mainstream placement is at one end and alternative placement is at the other, is too simplistic and theorised that a multi-dimensional model, which takes into consideration a number of attributes and identifies that a variety of placement options, should be developed. Lindsay (2007) suggested that addressing the needs of a child with SEN in an inclusive education system is not simply about mainstream placement versus alternative placement, or that inclusion can only be met by attending a mainstream placement on a full-time basis. Participants in Norwich's (2008) research stated that a balance between educating a child with SEN in a mainstream or an alternative placement, involving two part-time placements, can overcome tensions experienced by educational policy-makers and teachers, and between the moral drive for inclusion and the pragmatic resources currently available.

Despite providing an important start to developing a research base from which to supply evidence to inform practice, there are several limitations to the above prior research on educational placements. It should be noted that these four pieces of research utilised a qualitative methodology involving semi-structured interviews and identification of themes. This methodology, although providing quality of information, impedes the ability to generalise the findings. It may be that the pattern of participant responses identified by the researchers is unique only to those individuals. Additionally, all research conducted was related to children whose SEN were of a physical nature; therefore, it may be that strengths and limitations experienced by these individuals in mainstream and alternative placements will differ from an individual whose SEN is of a different nature. Additionally, of those who researched the perspectives of children with SEN on educational placement, only one included children who were, at the point of research, still of compulsory school age and no study sought the views of primary aged children.

Furthermore, it is possible that benefits and limitations of attending solely a mainstream or alternative placement may be different to those attending both concurrently. The next section will explore the research findings associated with dual educational placement.

2.9 Dual Educational Placements

As stated previously, dual educational placements are supported by the Department for Children, Schools and Families as a strategy of inclusive schooling (DfES, 2001). It has been suggested that dual educational placements may provide a balance between forming effective social relationships with receiving an appropriately challenging curriculum: this will enable children to develop their potential both academically and socially (Wilson, 2006).

The research base on the topic of dual educational placement is minimal and only two small scale studies were identified: the first via the systematic literature review entitled *'Parents choosing to combine special and inclusive early years settings: the best of both worlds'* by Flewitt and Nind (2007), and the second through a search on Google scholar entitled *'The best of both worlds? Parents' views on dual placement'* by Wilson (2006). The second piece of research was an unpublished Masters Dissertation.

In a study funded by Mencap City, Flewitt and Nind (2007) explored parents' perspectives of combining special and mainstream services for their children in early years, focusing on the process of decision making, expectations and experiences of the combined early years placement. They used a qualitative methodology for data collection, involving five face-to-face interviews with six parents of five children who experienced a dual educational placement. Thematic analysis was used as the data analysis tool. They used a deductive approach to thematic analysis as their research states that coding was driven by data previously obtained from questionnaires about dual educational placements distributed to service providers, voluntary organisations and parents. Flewitt and Nind (2007) identified the following themes within their data:

1. The best of both worlds

Parents were found to regularly use the phrase 'the best of both worlds'. It was reported that there seemed to be a belief from parents that it can be difficult for one setting to provide everything a child needs and by combining placements parents felt that their child might be able to get everything that they need.

2. Seeking ideal

Parents expressed the opinion that there was no ideal education for their child but combining mainstream and alternative placements offered the best available support.

3. Insurance

Parents perceived that each educational placement had its limitations and that one would make up for the inadequacies of the other.

4. Trial and error

Parents wanted their child to experience both a mainstream and alternative placement to inform future decisions pertaining to educational placement of their child.

5. Belonging

Parents suggested their motivation for wanting their child to remain connected to a mainstream placement was often associated with desire for their child to be part of the local community and make friends locally. Parents also acknowledged the need for children to have multiple identities because they belong to several communities.

6. Doing the right thing

Parents related that a desire to 'do the right thing' by their child was a key motivation for in making the decision to educate their child in a dual educational placement.

7. Hard choices

All parents reported that choosing to have their child in a dual educational placement was a difficult decision and many felt that their expectations had not been met. Parents informed the researchers that they consulted professionals, family and friends when making the decision to opt for a dual placement. Parents related that advice from a range of professionals had made them feel more supported in making those hard choices.

8. Struggled

This referred to a variety of experience including difficulties encountered in: getting information about all the educational options for their child: obtaining a statement of SEN; and having both placements detailed on their child's statement. Several parents reported that they received conflicting advice from different professionals. Parents also highlighted that they struggled to get the local authority to fund a dual educational placement and some were discouraged by local authority staff from pursuing this type of placement.

9. Feeling safe

This referred to the reassurance that staff in both settings could provide parents. Parents noted the need to be able to trust and have a positive relationship with the staff members at both educational placements.

The authors note in their research that parental participants appeared to be unconvinced that one setting can meet all of their child's needs and questioned where this leaves the concept of inclusion (Flewitt and Nind, 2007).

It would appear that several of the themes identified in this piece of research relate to some of those identified in the research discussed in the above sections, pertaining to education of a child with SEN in either a mainstream or alternative placement. It may be claimed that the content of the themes 'best of both worlds', 'seeking ideal' and 'insurance', in Flewitt and Nind's (2007) research are in line with the suggestion by Pitt and Curtin (2004) - that no one placement can meet the needs of all participants - and the proposition that combining the placements could provide the best of both worlds (Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004). The theme of 'belonging', in which parents stated that they would like their child to remain in a mainstream placement for some of the time to promote their inclusion in the local social community, is in line with the belief that a mainstream placement ensures the outcome of a more inclusive society and reduces discrimination (Giddens, 1997; Pitt and Curtin, 2004). However, it is interesting to note that children with SEN educated in a mainstream placement did not themselves recognise this as a benefit and, in fact, the converse was reported (Pitt and Curtin, 2004; Shah, 2007). The theme 'doing the right thing' may relate to the tension and dilemma identified in previous research, between the dominant perception of mainstream placements as a human right and balancing the pragmatic factors of opportunity to access appropriate resources and specialist support obtained from an alternative placement.

Flewitt and Nind's (2007) research, although an effective introduction into investigation of dual educational placements, does have some limitations. The research was not independent as it was funded by MENCAP: this has possible implications for the validity of the findings and the vested interest of the charity is not made explicit. By using a deductive approach based on questionnaire responses from individuals, who did not necessarily continue to participate in the interview and many of whom were not parents, meant that others constructs were being used to analyse the group of parental participants. Using this approach to thematic analysis is perceived, by the researcher, to be limiting; often, important information may be missed as it does not fit with the pre-determined coding schedule. It also uses a limited sample of participants, both in terms of number and category. This latter point refers to the researchers only focussing on parents of pre-school children. This current research will attempt to address these limitations and further details of this can be found in Chapter 3, The Methodology.

Willson (2006) also conducted a qualitative study exploring the views of parents whose children had either been in, or were currently receiving, a dual educational placement. This study used a semi-structured interview data collection methodology with seven parents, five face-to-face and two via email correspondence. Participants were recruited using a volunteer sample from those known to the parent partnership service in which the researcher was employed. It used a thematic analysis approach to data analysis. A primary aim of this research was said to be to determine if the same strengths and limitations (those identified when a child with SEN is placed either in a mainstream or alternative provision) are still present when the two are combined, and identify if any additional opportunities or challenges arise.

Willson (2006) identified four themes from the data specifically relating to dual educational placements: Collaboration; The Academic Aspect; Attitudes; and The Social Aspect. These are described in more detail below:

1. Collaboration

Communication was stated as the most important indicator of whether a dual educational placement was successful. This referred to communication between the two placements as well as with parents.

Consistency was raised as an issue by parents. It was identified that, when teaching assistants were attached to a child and therefore went to both educational settings, the dual educational placement was most successful.

Enhanced resources, better trained staff within the alternative placement and lack of training in the mainstream placement were also mentioned.

2. The Academic Aspect

Data collected relating to this theme opposed the information Willson (2006) had obtained in the prior literature review about the benefits and limitations of mainstream and alternative educational placements. In the initial literature review,

Willson (2006) had found special school placements provide inadequate education to children (Tomlinson, 1982 in Barnes 1990). Statistically, children from special schools are said to do less well academically (Alliance for Inclusive Education, 2005) and mainstream placements develop the children's drive towards achieving standards which enables them to compete in the employment market (Disability Rights Commission, 2005). Therefore, Willson (2006) anticipated that parents would perceive placement at a mainstream school as a means of developing their child's academic potential.

However, Willson (2006) claimed that a number of parents sought special school involvement due to mainstream schools' inability to progress their child's learning. This was attributed to lack of knowledge on the part of mainstream school staff in facilitating success for children with SEN and inability of the staff to adapt the curriculum appropriately. Therefore, special school placement was identified by parents as the setting in which their child's learning needs were catered for.

3. Attitudes

Attitudes of school teachers were identified as a significant attribute of the placement's success as they were deemed to influence how the child was responded to and accepted within the school environment. Parents reported that when staff, teaching assistants in particular, had been positive about the dual educational placement, it increased the success of the placement. However, some parents reported incidents of the mainstream school relinquishing responsibility of their child once the alternative placement became involved and staff in the mainstream placement deliberately excluding their child from extracurricular activities.

4. Social Aspects

Willson's (2006) prior literature review had suggested that bullying of children with SEN occurs in mainstream schools (Warnock, 2005). However, the research found that most parents perceived that the social element of the child's education came from the mainstream section of their dual educational placement and

bullying was not highlighted as a concern by any of the parents interviewed (Willson, 2006). Some parents did report that with a mainstream placement their child had been 'mothered' by other children in the school and reference was made to the tendency of others to 'look after' their child. Overall, parents perceived that the placement within a mainstream school was particularly beneficial in helping their children to get to know children from their local community.

In line with findings identified in research presented in above previous sections pertaining to the education of a child with SEN in either a mainstream or alternative placement, Willson's (2006) parent participants said that access to an alternative placement ensures provision of specialist resources (Shah, 2007) and better trained staff to deliver a differentiated curriculum to cater for a child's learning needs (Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004). Willson's (2006) findings that parents perceived negative attitudes of mainstream school staff towards inclusion to be a limitation was supported by previous findings by Pitt and Curtin, (2004). Willson (2006) claimed that mainstream placement was thought to provide children with SEN the social experience and integration necessary to be included in their local community, which was also supported by Flewitt and Nind's (2007) findings.

Willson (2006) identified shortfalls of dual educational placements pertaining to the placement combination, as well as specific challenges faced in the separate mainstream and special school settings. Positives of a dual educational experience, in terms of the combination of the two settings and what each setting can bring to the educational experience, were also reported (Willson, 2006). Some parents in this study used the phrase 'best of both worlds' in this piece of research to describe dual educational placements: this was also found previously in the study by Flewitt and Nind (2007). Willson (2006) suggested a more proactive promotion of dual educational placement as a viable approach which should be adopted by professionals advising parents (Willson, 2006). This may be of particular importance as Flewitt and Nind (2007) stated that parents often turned to professionals for advice and appreciated professional input. As such, it is considered important to continue from the research base identified here to further explore dual educational placements and to ensure that advice and support that can be offered by professionals is based on research evidence.

This research will extend that conducted by Flewitt and Nind (2007) and Willson (2006) by increasing the quantity of participants. It will also extend the category of participants researched to EPs and parents of children of varying ages and SEN. Unlike Willson's parental participants, who originated from association with Parent Partnership, due to accessing support to attend a tribunal about the child's provision, parent participants will not be sought from a single organisation, which may mean that their perceptions are less likely to have been biased. Additionally, this research will not only focus on the strengths and limitations of dual educational placements but be open to whatever is presented in the data. Further details will be discussed in chapter 3: Methodology.

2.10 Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter has explored the area of inclusion and the dominant theories which have underpinned the concept, and considered the benefits and limitations of mainstream and alternative educational placements as well as dual educational placements. This research is motivated, partly, by the possibility that a dual educational placement may be the most effective method currently available to a child with SEN to meet various aspects necessary for their development, such as the opportunity to be socially and physically included and have access to beneficial resources. The researcher proposes that, if it is accepted, an inclusive education system can be fostered through a multi-dimensional model, such as that suggested by Norwich (2008), taking into consideration various aspects - for example, social, educational and resources - whereby inclusion is most concerned with access to opportunities to reach a child's potential, then a dual educational placement is likely to be a viable educational placement option. The following chapter, Methodology, will provide details about how this piece of research was conducted.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.0 Methodology

This chapter will state the role of the researcher and give the context in which the research took place. It will then describe the research paradigm and methodological framework. Next, it outlines where and how participants were obtained and their composition. A detailed account is then given of the methodological design including: data collection and analysis. Finally, the chapter considers the validity and reliability of the research, the importance of researcher reflexivity and what ethical considerations were afforded.

3.1 Role of the Researcher

The researcher undertook a range of roles in this research which sought to explore parents' and EPs' perceptions of dual educational placements. The researcher was responsible for the research preparation and planning: this broadly involved designing the research, ensuring ethical approval was obtained to carry it out, enrolling participants, and organising interviews. The researcher assumed the role of interviewer, conducting all interviews to elicit perceptions about dual educational placements from parents and EPs. Data was transcribed by a professional typist and the researcher took responsibility for ensuring accurate transcription of the data. The researcher then analysed the data using thematic analysis following the Braun and Clarke (2006) methodology and presented the findings in context within this report.

Prior to interview, it was made verbally explicit to all participants that, although the researcher was also employed as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in the County Council in which the research was conducted, their relationship would solely be that of researcher and participant, and information provided by participants would only be used for research purposes. The researcher believed that it was important to reassure participants of the distinction between the two roles. Without this clear distinction, it was feared that some participants might be inhibited from feeling able to be honest or that they may assume that participation would result in some action taken by the TEP.

3.2 Research Paradigm and Methodological Framework

From the findings of a systematic literature review detailed previously in Chapter 2, the researcher found that dual educational placements are an under-researched area. Following preliminary informal discussion about the topic with EPs in the County Council context in which the TEP was employed, and one other London based Educational Psychology Service, it seemed to be a research area in which EPs would be interested. It was hoped that this research would identify important areas for future investigation. Further details have been given previously in this document about the origin of the researcher's idea to conduct research in the area of dual educational placements.

A qualitative methodological framework, which does not restrict exploration of participant perceptions of dual educational placements, was considered by the researcher as most suitable for two reasons. Firstly, this research will be an initial exploration of the topic of dual educational placements as the researcher had no recommendations, or key concepts, from previous research findings about this topic from which to narrow the design or focus of this exploration. Consequently, it was perceived as important by the researcher to ensure that the methodological framework would allow identification of whatever arose in the exploration. The second reason is to ensure that the empirical design is flexible enough to respond to the constructivist epistemological position which the researcher took here. This meant that the methodological framework was required to accommodate the meaning and knowledge participants had constructed about dual educational placements, and take into account possible multiple constructions about them. A quantitative approach was rejected by the researcher because it would limit the investigation to only chosen variables, and would not enable as broad initial exploration or have been as appropriate to use alongside a constructivist epistemological position.

3.3 Participants and Sampling Framework

The researcher chose to explore the perceptions held by parents and EPs about dual educational placements. A reason for opting to investigate EP perceptions was, from reflection on their own professional career and noting government legislation about

the responsibility an EP has in identifying a child's SEN and the provision required to meet those needs, it would appear that these professionals play an important role in influencing decisions made about educational placement for a child with SEN. Additionally, educational psychology usually prides itself on evidence based practice but the researcher found EPs had not been previously involved in research on this topic. A motive for deciding to look at parent perceptions was as a result of the researcher's own observation during their professional practice: those parents often attend tribunals and/or contact parent support agencies about the educational placement of their child. Also, the researcher notes that government legislation, from the late 1900s to the Green Paper published in 2011, appears to have become increasingly in favour of parental involvement in placement decisions and highlights the important and potentially insightful contribution that they can make to deliberation about educational placement for their child. The researcher thought that a comparison of perceptions about dual educational placements from parents and EPs may not only prove interesting but also effective in the development of successful dual educational placements.

Parents of children who had experience of, or were currently experiencing, a dual educational placement, and EPs who had involvement with or were currently involved with a case of a child experiencing a dual educational placement, were identified as eligible participants for this research, meeting the specified inclusion criteria. These participant groups and inclusion criteria were identified because it was thought that, having had experience of dual educational placements, they may provide more in-depth knowledge about this topic and the research may be of greater significance to them. All participants were drawn from within a large East Anglian County in the United Kingdom. It was decided not to extend the study outside this area as it would be impractical in terms of time and finances.

A purposive sampling method was utilised to obtain EP participants who met the specific inclusion criteria referred to above. It has been claimed that this method is effective for obtaining in-depth knowledge about a specific topic of interest (Ball, 1990). In order to conduct this method, an email was sent from the researcher to all thirty EPs and TEPs employed across the five Educational Psychologist and Specialist Support Service area teams in the County Council, inviting them to

participate in the research if they met the inclusion criteria. The email gave details of the research, included an introduction of the topic of interest, explained the commitment the participants would be required to make and asked them to contact the researcher if they were able to participate or would like further information (please refer to appendix 2). Of the thirty EPs the researcher contacted, sixteen responded. Of those who responded, eight were able to participate as they met the inclusion criteria. Of those EPs who participated, one was from the East team, one from the North team and one from the South team of the county: the rest were from the county's central city team.

Initially, a purposive sampling method was also utilised to obtain parent participants who met the specific inclusion criteria referred to above. This was carried out by eliciting details from EPs of parents who have had experience of dual educational placements. However, some of the EPs were not comfortable with the researcher contacting parents with whom they had worked. Therefore, only six potential parent participants were identified from recommendations made by two EPs. As access to this participant population was difficult, a further two parent participants were identified through a snowballing sampling methodology as they were suggested by one of the parent participants identified by an EP. Initially, all parents received a letter inviting them to participate which provided appropriate information about the aims, nature and procedures of the research, as well as the time commitment required (please refer to appendix 3). After having received no response from any parents by the 28th June 2010, the researcher telephoned them as outlined in the letter. From this, the researcher enrolled all eight parental participants. The final number of parental participants was, in actual fact, eleven: three were parent couples. All the participants came from the North, South and Central region of the County in which the research was undertaken.

Initially, the researcher had envisaged that parents of children who had experience of, or were currently experiencing, a dual educational placement and the EP who had involvement with their child could be interviewed in this research. It was thought that comparison of parent and EP perceptions about the same child's dual educational placement would increase the validity of the research by reducing the quantity of different contextual variables. However, practical difficulties meant that this was not

possible. Six of the eight parents' children had previous involvement with two of the EPs who also participated in this research. Parents spoke predominantly about their individual experience with their child's dual educational placement; EPs spoke in general about their experiences of being involved with cases where children had been educated in a dual educational placement and not specifically about one case.

The composition of the parent participants was:

- All parents were white British;
- All of the parent's children had a statement of special educational needs which they obtained in pre-school, had started a dual educational placement in reception year and were currently in primary education;
- Four parents had female children and three parents' male children attending dual educational placements;
- The types of dual educational placements that the children of the interviewed parents attended were:
 - Four children attended an alternative educational placement three days a week and a mainstream educational placement two days a week;
 - Two children attended an alternative educational placement one day a week and a mainstream educational placement four days a week;
 - One child attended an alternative educational placement two days a week and a mainstream educational placement three days a week.

The composition of the EP participants was:

- All EPs were white British;
- All had been qualified as an EP for over one year;

3.4 Interviews

The qualitative method of interview was selected by the researcher to collect data for this research. Interviewing participants to gather the data for this research was preferable because an interview lends itself well to the constructivist epistemological

position of this research taken by the researcher. It has been proposed that the very nature of an interview assumes a human interaction which is central to knowledge production (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008; Kvale, 1996: 14).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2008) claim an interview methodology is a flexible tool for data collection as it enables information to be conveyed verbally and non-verbally, as well as spoken and heard. This is believed to be a particularly useful methodology in this instance as it will allow the researcher to capture the uniqueness of the participant's perceptions, to clarify meaning, and to uncover preliminary and in-depth information pertaining to the topic of dual educational placements. The interview methodology allows the interviewer to press the interviewee for greater detail in their answers and to follow any potentially interesting lines of conversation. It is also suggested that there is a higher response rate for interviews than from other methodologies as participants are motivated due to feeling more involved with the research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008; Oppenheim, 1992: 81-2).

Kvale (1996: 88) suggested seven stages of an interview investigation. The stages are: (1) thematising; (2) designing; (3) interviewing; (4) transcribing; (5) analysing; (6) verifying; and (7) reporting. The first six stages are used next to structure explanation of the methodological design of this research.

3.4.1 Interview Investigation – Stage One: Thematising

This involved identifying the purpose of the research, a broad aim of the research and reducing the broad aim to specific research questions (Kvale, 1996: 88).

The purpose of this research was to conduct an initial exploration into the perceptions of dual educational placements held by parent and EP participants. It was viewed that this research would begin to provide an evidence base for this type of placement. It was discovered in the review of relevant literature, detailed in Chapter 2, that minimal previous research had been conducted into dual educational placements and the majority of studies had focused on either a mainstream placement or an alternative placement. Also, it was envisaged that the effectiveness of dual educational placements may be increased via evidence based practice.

The main research questions identified were:

- What are parent and EP perceptions of a dual educational placement?
- What are the differences and similarities between parent and EP perceptions of dual educational placements?

In previous research conducted by Flewitt and Nind (2007), they claimed their participants felt supported by professional advice in their decision to educate their child in a dual educational placement. Therefore, the researcher perceived it important to investigate the professional role EPs played in parents' dual educational placement decisions and their impact.

The researcher was also interested in collecting information to increase the effectiveness of dual educational placements and support or refute the findings from previous literature (Flewitt and Nind, 2007; Willson, 2006). It was envisaged that information pertaining to these aspects would be obtained via the above research questions.

3.4.2 Interview Investigation – Stage Two: Designing

The designing stage involved identification of the type of interview methodology and translation of the research questions into interview questions to provide an interview schedule (Kvale, 1996: 88).

The data collection tool of interview guide approach described by Patton (1980) was selected for use in this research. An interview guide approach is said to come under the umbrella category of an unstructured interview (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008; Patton, 1980: 206). This approach for data collection meant that key discussion topics and questions were prepared as an interview schedule, in advance, but were not necessarily addressed in the same order with each participant. It ensures that the interview remains focused but provides a more conversational atmosphere and allows for deviation from script. This data collection tool was

deemed useful as the researcher had little prior knowledge of the topic of dual educational placements and it was thought that a less structured interview might be most effective for exploration of individual perceptions (Patton, 1980). Lincoln and Guba (1985: 269) suggested unstructured interviews, such as the interview guided approach, are useful when researchers are not aware of what they do not know and therefore rely on the respondents to tell them: this is applicable to this research.

When translating the research questions into the key discussion topics and questions for the interview schedule, the researcher gave attention to the advice on developing an interview schedule by Arksey and Knight (1999: 93-5). In line with their advice, the easier, less threatening and less controversial questions were presented first. Wording of questions was also considered, in terms of how to put interviewees at ease; for example, 'what' questions were posed more often than 'why' questions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008; Arksey and Knight, 1999: 93-5).

The majority of the questions used in the interview schedules were open ended. Kerlinger (1970: 357) described open-ended questions as 'those that supply a frame of reference for respondents' answers, but put minimum restraint on their responses'. Therefore, the questions allowed the individuality of the participant responses to be captured. The flexible nature of open-ended questions allowed the interviewer to probe a participant (which is discussed in greater detail below) and go into more depth if it was considered interesting to do so. It allows the interviewer to clarify misunderstandings and meaning if it is felt necessary. It enables the interviewer to test the limits of the respondent's knowledge, encourage co-operation, establish rapport and allows the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008). Open ended questions may be most likely to produce unanticipated answers which might be of interest. Using these types of questions meant that the interviews were quicker and easier to plan and conduct, but more challenging and time consuming to analyse.

As previously stated, the researcher included pre-determined probes in the interview schedule, to be used as necessary during the interview. The probes consisted of: 'can you tell me more about that'; 'why'; repeating the question in a questioning tone; and gestures and tones to encourage the interviewee to continue giving more detail.

The interviewer also utilised 'checking out' questions which clarified meaning of a response: for example, 'do you mean' or 'let me see if I have understood what you are saying correctly'.

Taking into consideration that which has been discussed above, the outcome was an interview schedule which included main discussion topics, key questions to be put forward for each topic, and a series of probe and 'checking out' questions. This was adapted from information from Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2008: 342-343) (please refer to interview schedules for parent and EP participants, appendices 6 and 7).

Designing of the interview also took into consideration sampling, for example how many interviews were to be conducted and how many interviewers there were to conduct the interviews. As this research was time limited and carried out solely by the researcher, interview schedules were kept relatively short.

3.4.3 Interview Investigation – Stage Three: Interviewing

The researcher arranged to visit the EP participants in their place of work to carry out the interviews during April and May of 2010, and the parent participants in their homes during July 2010. On meeting the participants, and prior to the data collection, the researcher gave all participants a copy of the Participant Information Handout to read through: this informed them of the nature and purpose of the interview but was careful not to give detail which may bias the responses (please refer to appendix 8) (Tuckman, 1972). The researcher then explained to participants the conduct and duration of the interview, as well as how responses were to be recorded and stored. The latter two issues also entailed discussion about the confidentiality of the data collected from the participants. Participants were ensured that all voice recorded data would be deleted once the researcher had finished using it in the data analysis process, that all transcripts and quotes used would be anonymous and any discussion pertaining to the data would only be with the researcher's university supervisor and one other Children's Services colleague, and would not involve names of parents, EPs, children or schools. The interviewees were then actively given the opportunity to ask questions. Participants were next asked to read through the consent form and sign it if they were still willing to participate (please refer to

appendix 9). All parent and EP participants gave informed consent. Parent couples were interviewed together.

In preparing and conducting the interview, the interviewer ensured that attention was paid to the importance of planning, opening of the interview, pacing, timing and keeping the conversation flowing (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008: Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Kvale (1996: 147) stated that an effective interviewer is not only knowledgeable about the subject matter but also an expert in interaction and communication, and this is what the researcher endeavoured to achieve during interviews. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2008) suggested that, to assist an effective interviewer and interviewee rapport, the interviewer should make every effort during the interview to be clear, polite, non-threatening, friendly, personable and respectful: this was borne in mind by the interviewer. The interviewer ensured that they engaged in active listening skills with both verbal and non-verbal signals throughout the interview. The interviewer endeavoured to avoid interruptions by turning off their mobile phone, avoiding asking embarrassing questions, not giving advice or their opinions on the topic, showing interest, refraining from giving signs of approval or disapproval, giving respondents adequate time to answer, and moving on to different questions if it appeared that the interviewee did not want to answer a particular question (Field and Morse, 1989 and Arksey and Knight, 1999).

Kitwood (1977) offered three conceptions of an interview:

- 1) a potential means of pure information transfer. This point refers to the idea that an interview can, in the right conditions, allow participants to disclose their 'core' personality. This suggests that, if the interviewer builds a good rapport with the participant, they will feel able to give sincere answers, avoiding, for example, socially desirable responses;
- 2) a transaction which inevitably has bias. This point refers to the concept that individuals within a situation often define it using factors such as emotions, sub-conscious needs and interpersonal influences;
- 3) an encounter that shares many of the features of everyday life. The interview is seen as a social encounter and, therefore, influenced by the common dynamics of a social situation.

The researcher conducting the interviews ensured that the above concepts identified by Kitwood (1997) were kept in mind and endeavoured to establish a positive rapport between themselves and the participant.

The interview is considered a social, interpersonal encounter and not merely a data collection exercise (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008). Cicourel (1964) stated that there may be unavoidable features in an interview which, in a normal social encounter, would be regarded as problematic. These might be a possible mutual distrust, social distance, and interviewer's control: the interviewee may adopt avoidance tactics if the questioning is too deep and the meaning of what is said by the interviewee may be different to the meaning attributed to the same information by the interviewer. The researcher acknowledges that some of the objectivity afforded to other non-interactive methodology will be lost using an interview methodology but it is deemed justifiable due to the depth of the desired information. In this research, the researcher will endeavour to be reflexive and honest about the possible implications of their presence as interviewer.

Generally, the interviews carried out with the EPs asked about their experience of dual educational placements, where they saw the role of the EP in relation to this area and their general beliefs about dual educational placements. Parents were asked about how the placement originated, their experience of it and their general beliefs about dual educational placements. The interviews lasted between 15 – 45 minutes.

A digital recording device was used to record the interviews. This method of recording the data was assumed to be reasonably unobtrusive. It allowed verbal data to be collected and did not divert the interviewer's attention; this may influence the rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. It is also considered as a highly reliable method of data collection.

3.4.4 Interview Investigation – Stage Four: Transcription

Each interview was recorded via digital Dictaphone and transferred onto the researcher's password protected computer. Due to time constraints, the participant's

audio data was transcribed verbatim for the researcher by a professional touch typist from the digital Dictaphone. The researcher listened to the transcribed interviews during the analysis stage and a high level of accuracy was found. Any minor changes that may have slightly altered the original meaning of the text were made by the researcher. As the researcher also had assumed the role of the interviewer, contextual information surrounding the interview would not be lost.

The outcome of the transcription stage was fifteen transcripts, eight of which were a product of parent interviews and seven a product of EP interviews. The reason for obtaining only seven EP interviews, when eight EPs were interviewed, was because - at their request - two EPs were interviewed together. One of the parent data transcripts was subsequently excluded from the analysis stage as, during the interview with the parent, it became apparent that she did not meet the inclusion criteria for this research. Her child had had a six week block placement at an alternative provision whilst he remained on role at a mainstream provision and had returned to their mainstream placement once the six week alternative placement had finished. Therefore, her experience did not meet the required experience of two placements within the same week. The final product of the data collection used in data analysis was fourteen transcripts, seven from parents and seven from EPs (please refer to appendix 10 for an example transcript).

3.4.5 Interview Investigation – Stage five: Analysing Data

The Braun and Clarke (2006) method of thematic analysis was used to analyse the parent and EP transcripts, referred to here as data sets. Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) briefly explain this methodology as a means of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data, stating that it organises and describes data in rich detail. Boyatzis (1998) extends this, asserting that this methodology can also be used to interpret various aspects of the research topic. The researcher will ensure that the thematic analysis data analysis tool will be used to satisfy both Braun and Clarke's (2006) and Boyatzis' (1998) explanations.

The researcher is aware that thematic analysis is not the only analysis tool available for qualitative data such as interview transcripts. Other possible interview analysis

tools were considered by the researcher such as content analysis (Gottschalk, 1995), discourse analysis (Burman and Parker, 1993; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Willig, 2003), grounded theory (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith and Osborn, 2003); however, thematic analysis was chosen as it was thought to be the best fit for the design and purpose of the research.

The decision to choose thematic analysis over the above mentioned data analysis tools was based on the idea that content analysis is said to be suited for use in research where a pre-list of themes are available from prior literature on the topic to code the data: this was not the case in this research. Discourse analysis appeared to be predominantly concerned with deriving meaning and impact from a detailed examination of language used by participants; this study is more concerned with analysis of the experience reported by participants. Although there are several methodological similarities between grounded theory data analysis and thematic analysis, there is a crucial difference of the purpose of the research. Grounded theory is said to be used with the intention of development of a new theory from what participants say. This was not the objective of this research. This research is an initial exploration into the topic of dual educational placements and its aim was to extend knowledge in this area, rather than generate a new theory, at this stage. Additionally, when using grounded theory a literature review is not always performed prior to data collection which was not the case in this research. IPA presented a similar methodology of data analysis to that of thematic analysis used in this research; however, it was perceived by the researcher that the questions being asked in the research did not lend themselves to an IPA methodology as they were not phenomenological in nature. For example, instead of asking what it is like to be a parent of a child receiving a dual educational placement, which would be appropriate for IPA, this research asks about the parents' perception of the experience and not the impact the experience has on them.

Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis is a flexible qualitative methodological tool that can be applied to different theoretical frameworks, epistemological positions and research questions. Therefore, it allowed the researcher freedom from any theoretical commitments, unlike other methodologies,

such as conversational analysis (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998) and IPA (Smith and Osborn, 2003); instead, it allowed the researcher to view the data descriptively and interpretively (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis permits a rich thematic description of the data sets to be obtained which was deemed important by the researcher as dual educational placement is an area which is under-researched and participants' views on this area are not previously known (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The researcher also acknowledges that thematic analysis is described as a more accessible form of qualitative data analysis and most suitable for an individual conducting their first piece of qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) advised that, when conducting thematic analysis, decisions about epistemological position and how the analysis is executed should be made transparent. As previously stated, the epistemological position the researcher has taken in this research is that of constructivist. This epistemology carries with it the theoretical assumptions that reality is independent of human thought but meaning and knowledge is constructed. In relation to this research, it may mean that there will be certain factual aspects to participants' experiences of dual educational placements: how they reflect on those experiences will be individual and give meaning and create knowledge about those experiences. A constructivist perspective would argue that individuals may have the same experience but interpret it very differently, resulting in different meanings and thoughts.

An inductive rather than deductive approach was taken to coding the data sets as the researcher approached data analysis with limited pre-conceptions about what might be identified in the data. Additionally, there was not thought to be enough prior quality research identified to develop prior codes to apply to the data sets produced in this research. This meant that the data was coded without trying to fit it to a pre-existing coding frame, or fit it to the researcher's expectations based on prior theoretical knowledge. The researcher was aware that an inductive approach to coding data sets requires reflexivity throughout the analysis process, to ensure that they do not apply their preconceived ideas about what will be in the data when reading the transcripts. However, in line with the constructivist views, it is believed not to be

totally possible for analysis to be free from epistemological and theoretical positions. It is acknowledged that themes will be guided by research questions and the questions posed to the participants. An effort was made to ensure research integrity though the researcher frequently reflecting on their own thought process during coding.

Thematic data analysis was concentrated at a semantic, rather than a latent, level. Themes were identified within the explicit or surface meanings of data and the researcher was not looking for anything beyond what a participant said (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 84). Data was described in terms of themes and interpreted in terms of the possible significance of the themes and broader implications (Patton, 1990; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The researcher held the view that individual's constructs are unique to that person; therefore, it would not be possible for the researcher to accurately give meaning to what participants report.

The data sets were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) phases of thematic analysis, detailed in the journal article titled '*Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology*' (2006). This is a method by which patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest are identified, analysed and reported in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The six phases of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model are: (1) familiarising yourself with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. It is acknowledged that the six phases are not necessarily linear but involve moving back and forth between them to ensure accurate representation of the data and that all relevant information is included. Parent and EP data sets were analysed separately. Here, further detail will be given to explain how the researcher applied the model to the parent and EP data sets:

- Phase 1 - Familiarising yourself with your data

As the researcher also took the role of interviewing participants, initial ideas about patterns in the data from the topics which were frequently raised during the process were tentatively formed prior to reading the transcribed data. Subsequently, the researcher familiarised themselves with the data by reading each transcript once

whilst also listening to the audio tape and twice again, without the audio accompaniment, to 'immerse' themselves in the data in order to identify patterns and meaning as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) (please refer to appendix 10 for an example of an anonymised transcript). During this process, a hand written list was developed, identifying initial ideas about patterns in the data, key points and what were aspects of interest (Fereday, 2006).

- Phase 2 - Generating initial codes.

The researcher re-read the transcripts for a fourth time whilst manually developing initial data codes via highlighting data items and making written notes on the transcripts. Boyatzis (1998: 63) stated that a code refers to 'the most basic segment or element of the raw data that can be assessed in a meaningful way' by the researcher. Coding the data involved working systematically through each data set, giving equal attention to each data item to identify patterns and relevant and interesting features in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Tuckett, 2005).

- Phase 3 - Searching for themes.

This phase is said to re-focus the analysis at the broader level of themes. Boyatzis (1998) defined a theme as 'a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon'. Crabtree and Miller (1999) suggested that developing themes involves the process of connecting codes to identify patterns in the data.

To identify patterns in the data sets which could be recognised as themes, the researcher collated all the relevant coded data extracts into meaningful groups and organised them under a hierarchical structure of overarching themes and sub-themes. This task was undertaken using Microsoft Word to copy and paste data extracts into several tables relating to various themes and sub-themes. Each participant was assigned a colour so that the origin of the data item could be traced. Please refer to appendix 11 for an example of a Phase 3 – Searching for Themes table. In this research, themes were labels identified by the researcher as indicating the content of

the theme and a sub-theme heading was also a label which indicated the content of the sub-theme. Here, content refers to the meaning and knowledge conveyed from the coded extracts and analysed by the researcher.

At this phase, initial themes, sub-themes and associated codes were placed in several tables and then initial themes and sub-themes were presented in a visually accessible form of an initial thematic map and presented below. At this point, it is thought that, later in the analysis process, some coded extracts may go on to become themes or sub-themes and others may be discarded (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Diagram 1 Initial Thematic Map – Parent Data

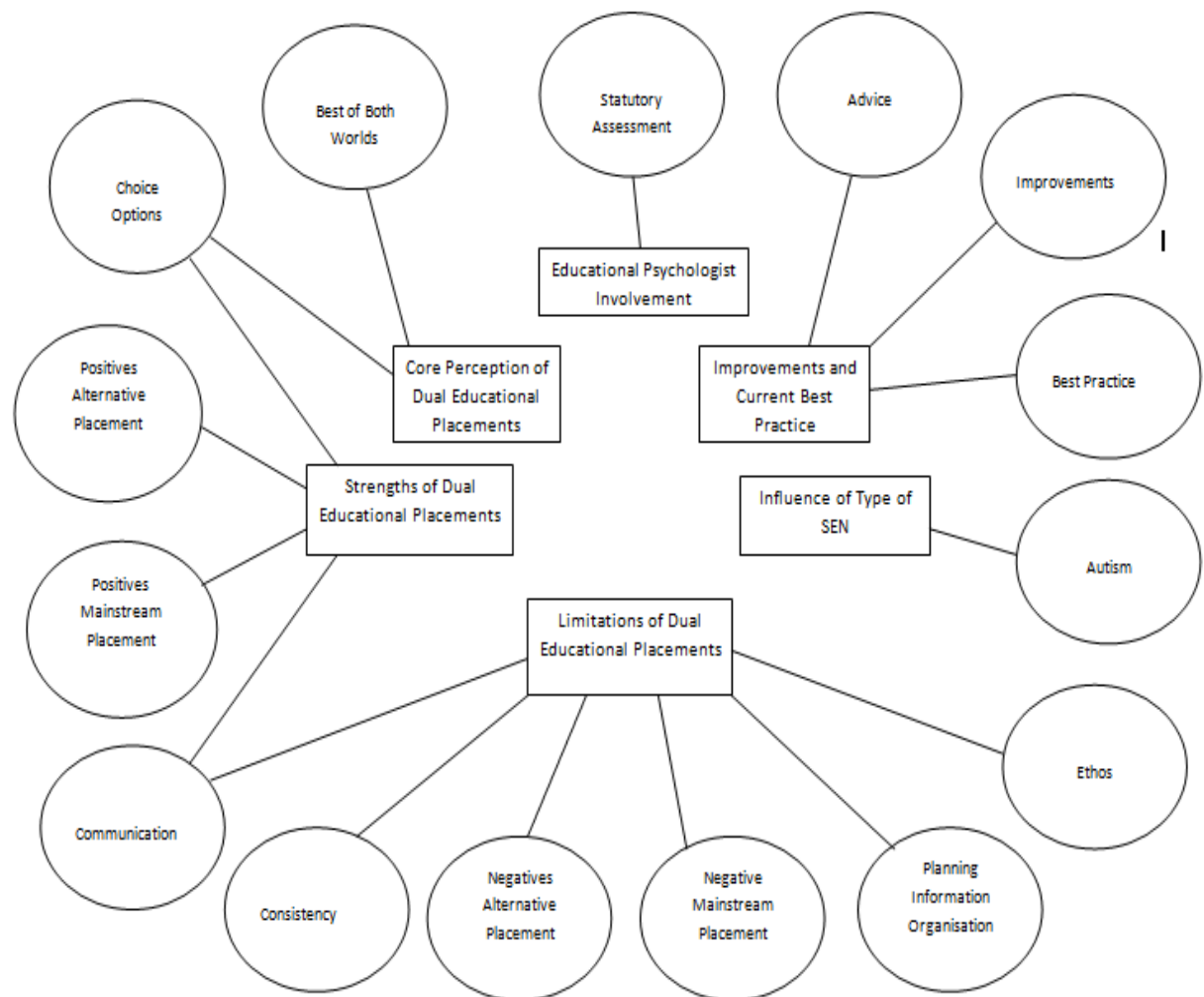
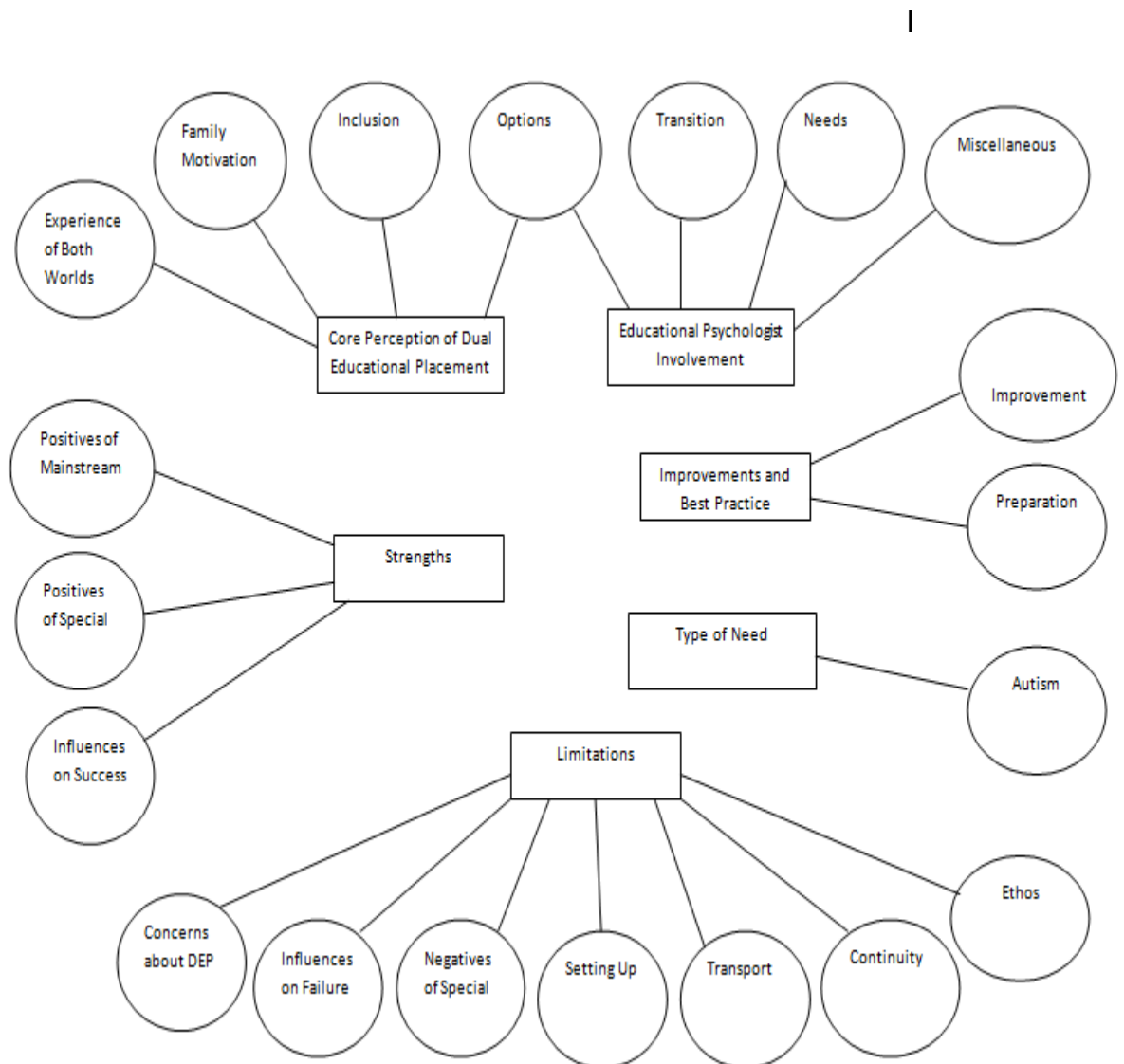


Diagram 2 Initial Thematic Map – Educational Psychologist Data



- Phase 4 - Reviewing themes.

The potential themes which had been identified by the researcher were then reviewed using two steps (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The first step involved the researcher reading the coded extracts under each theme and sub-theme heading to judge whether the coded extracts form a consistent pattern.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggested that reliability in qualitative research can be addressed through the method of inter-rater reliability. This method was used in this phase of the thematic analysis process to ensure that the selected set of coded

extracts do lend themselves to a theme. Here, the researcher aimed for a 90 per cent minimum inter-rater reliability: this was achieved.

The second step involved the researcher re-reading the transcripts for each data set to judge the validity of the candidate themes and sub-themes by reflecting on how representative they were of the data set as a whole. This also ensured that no potential coding opportunities had been missed. Required changes were then made. This resulted in 'candidate' thematic maps which are presented below.

Diagram 3 Candidate Thematic Map – Parent Data

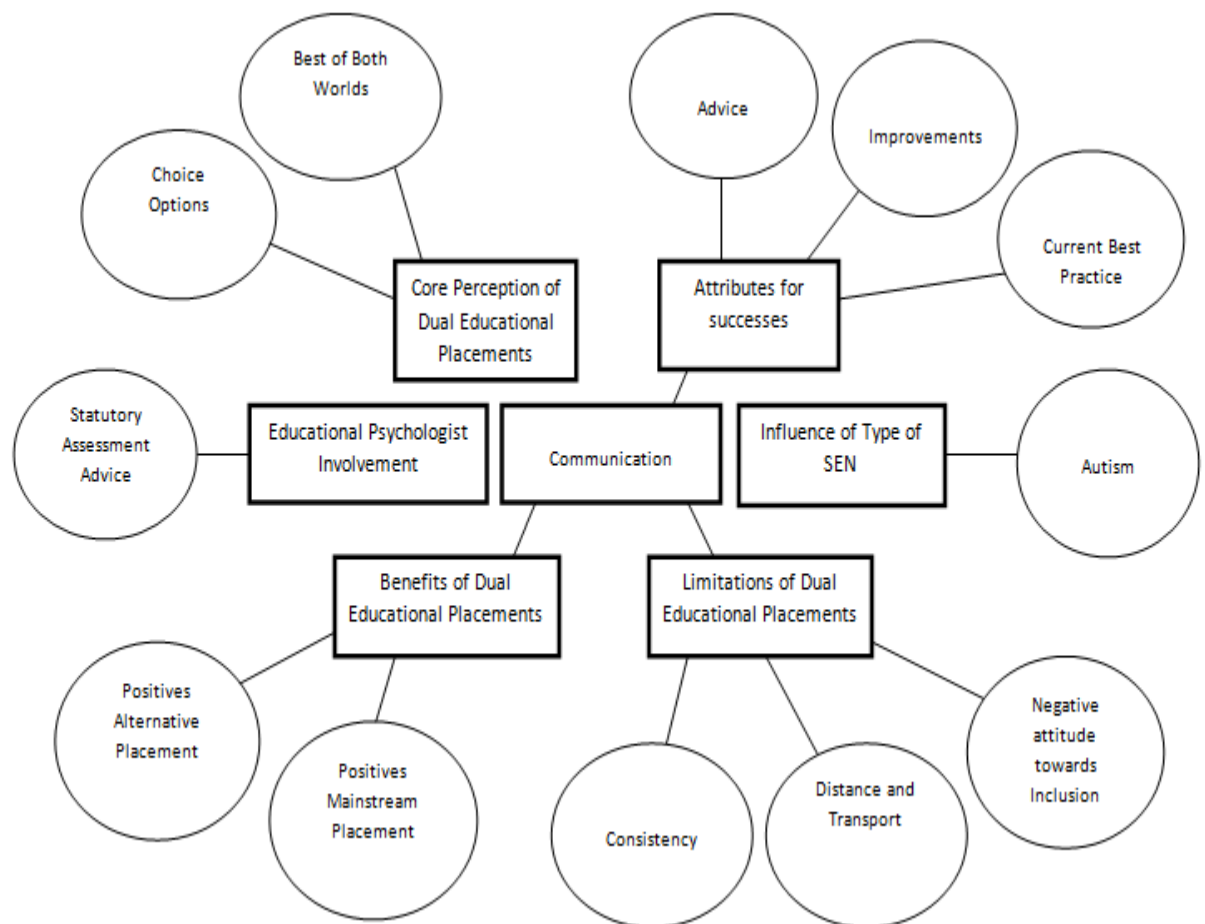
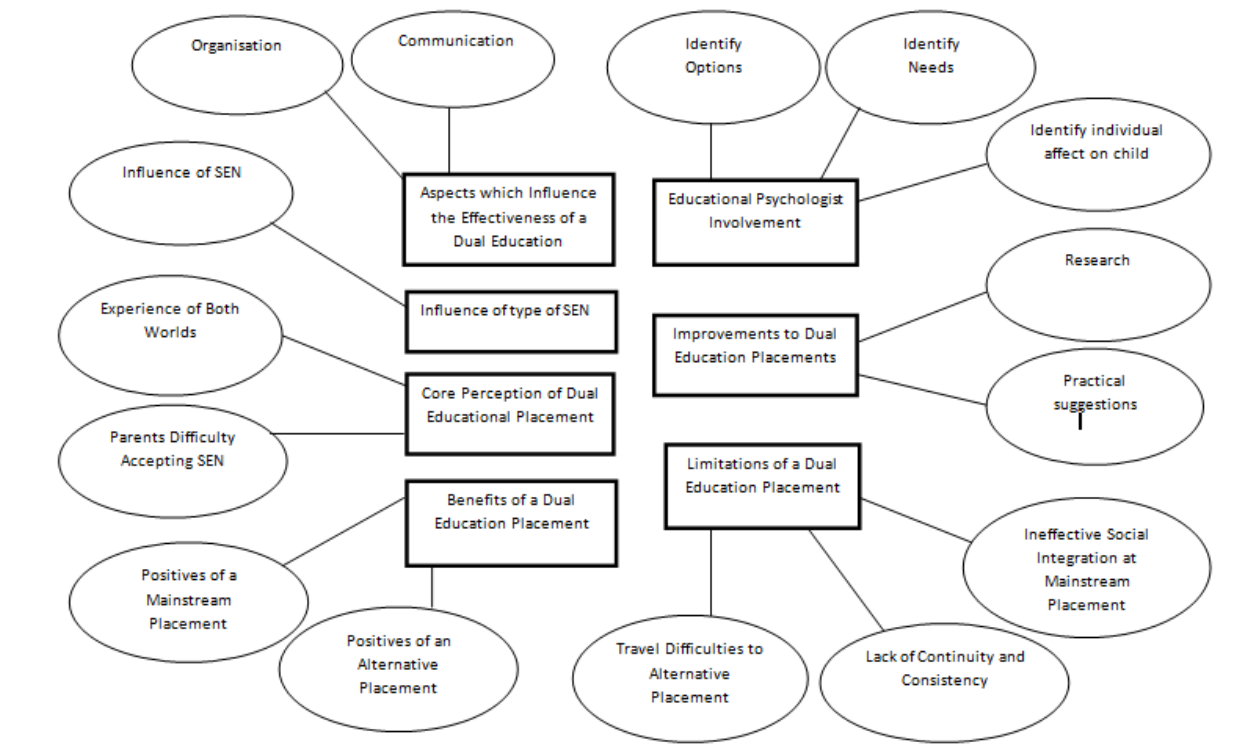


Diagram 4 Candidate Thematic Map – Educational Psychologist Data



- Phase 5 - Defining and naming themes.

The researcher considered themes, sub-themes and coded data extracts individually and as part of the data set, and considered what aspect of the data each theme captures, what is interesting about them and why. Time was taken to explore the relationship between the research findings and questions. This resulted in generating clear definitions and names for each theme. It entailed ensuring that there was not too much overlap between themes although it is acknowledged that there is likely to be some tension between themes.

- Phase 6 - Producing the report.

This involved telling the 'story' of the data by detailing the findings and possible interpretations of the data. In this research, the findings and possible interpretations of the data will be presented in the form of themes in Chapter 4: Results.

3.4.6 Interview Investigation – Stage Six: Verifying Stage

Winter (2000) recommend that validity of qualitative research can be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and range of the data obtained. It has been stated that 'understanding' is a more suitable term than 'validity' in qualitative research (Maxwell, 1992; Mishler, 1990).

Maxwell (1992) suggested five types of validity when conducting qualitative research. These were: (1) descriptive validity which refers to the factual accuracy of the account; (2) interpretive validity which is about the ability of the researcher to catch the meaning and interpretations of situations; (3) theoretical validity which is the extent the researcher uses the theoretical position taken in the research transparently; (4) generalisability which is the how useful the findings of the research will be for understanding similar situations; and (5) Evaluative Validity which is the extent to which researchers honestly appraise the degree to which the findings of the research have been represented accurately, and their own influence on the data. In designing this research, the researcher followed Winter's (2000) and Maxwell's (1992) frameworks for creating qualitative research which retain validity.

The research also sought to achieve internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the degree to which the research findings represent what was in the data set (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008). LeCompte and Preissle (1993: 323-4) noted eight types of internal validity in qualitative research which are: (1) confidence in the data; (2) authenticity of the data; (3) the cogency of the data; (4) soundness of the research design; (5) the credibility of the data; (6) the auditability of the data; (7) dependability of the data; and (8) the confirmability of the data. External validity refers to the extent to which results can be generalised to the wider population and similar situations. It is not possible to approach generalisability in the manner of a positivist which is traditionally known to hold context variables constant and investigates only that which relates to the hypothesis, because the research domain here is too wide. Schofield (1990: 200) suggests that it is important in qualitative research to provide a clear, detailed and in-depth description so that others can decide the extent to which findings from one piece of research are generalisable to

another situation. These aspects of types of validity, internal and external validity will be further considered post-data collection in Chapter 5: Discussion.

Boyatzis (1998:144) suggested that, when using thematic analysis, reliability can be determined by the consistency of the researcher's observations, labelling and interpretation, which is referred to as consistency of judgement. The consistency of judgement, among different viewers of the data, was tested to an extent through inter-rater reliability previously mentioned. The extent to which themes identified by the researcher in this research agree with the limited prior literature about dual educational placements will be addressed in the discussion section of this document. This is termed 'category agreement with an expert' (Smith, 1992: 146). Although the researcher considered it important to protect the flexibility of the data collection method of interview to increase the likelihood of obtaining valid and in-depth information from participants, the researcher ensured that all questions on the interview schedule were posed to the participants, thereby providing each participant with the opportunity to respond to the same questions and also increasing the reliability of the findings.

3.5 Reflexivity

Nightingale and Comby (1999: 288) suggested that a researcher is required to demonstrate reflexivity to explore and identify the extent to which their involvement in the research may, or may not, have influenced it throughout the entire process. Nightingale and Comby (1999: 288) proposed two types of reflexivity: the first is personal reflexivity which refers to the researcher considering how their own values, interests, experiences, beliefs, political ideas and social identities may have influenced the research. The second is epistemological reflexivity which refers to identification of how the design of the research has limited what might otherwise have been found.

When using the interview data collection methodology, the researcher was mindful of their own effect on the relationship they had with the interviewee. It is acknowledged that, by the fact that the interviewer defines the topic of conversation, they - broadly speaking - control the boundaries of the interview and the closing of the interview; the

interviewer is in control of the dynamic. During the interview, the interviewer was sensitive to their own influence on the situation, careful to be non-judgemental, to conceal any opinions or biases they may have felt during the interview, and to highlight the worth of the interviewees' input about the topic. It was envisaged that the benefit of the researcher also taking the part of the interviewer and being employed in the area the research was conducted is that they had local knowledge of systems and constraints in the area; this would assist them in understanding the information presented to them by the interviewees.

The researcher, in keeping with the constructivist epistemological position of this research, understands that they have an active role in selecting the research topic and questions, interview questions and identifying patterns/themes in the data sets and reporting them (Taylor and Ussher, 2001). The researcher does not agree with the idea that themes 'emerge' from the data. As Ely et al (1997: 205–206) argued, if themes 'reside' anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them. The researcher combated this effect by regularly questioning what they had identified in the data and returning to the transcripts and data sets to check the validity of what had been coded. The researcher also kept a diary throughout the research process which was regularly reviewed during the course of the research and discussed the research and analysis with their university supervisor. Additionally, it was hoped that enlisting a colleague, who was also an employee in the Children's Services Department but not an EP or TEP, to check the reliability of the coded extracts with the themes and sub-themes will have buffered against some potential loss of objectivity if the researcher alone had considered the raw data.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

In line with the University of East London guidelines for conducting research, the researcher can confirm that ethical permission to conduct this research was sought from the university and was granted. The researcher ensured that the research was undertaken in line with the Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) guidance published by the British Psychological Society, including the four principles of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity. The researcher gave particular ethical consideration to:

- providing the highest standards of respect and consideration to all participants;
- appreciation and sensitivity for the intrusion which research may have on individuals, their families, alternative service providers and educational communities;
- gaining informed consent from the participants themselves and explaining their right to withdraw from the study, without giving a reason, at any point;
- informing participants that they may decline answering any questions put to them;
- debriefing participants at the conclusion of their participation;
- ensuring that confidentiality and anonymity will be upheld in line with the Data Protection Act (1998).

The researcher ensured that investigation procedures were viewed from the standpoint of the participants to eliminate any potential risks. Parent participants, in particular, were made aware that the researcher could not respond to requests for advice from them and was purely in the capacity of researcher. Upon reporting the research findings, the researcher was honest and accurate in conveying professional conclusions, opinions, and research findings and in acknowledging the potential limitations.

3.7 Summary of Chapter 3

The points considered of central importance from the above section have been simplified in the table below for clarity.

Table 5 Methodological Design Overview

Methodological framework	Qualitative
Parent participant sampling	Purposive and snowballing sampling
EP participant sampling	Purposive sampling
Data collection tool	Interview guided approach
Data analysis tool	Thematic analysis

In the following chapter, Results, the application of Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis as a procedure for exploring the parent and EP data sets will be described in detail, and findings discovered will be presented.

Chapter 4

Results

4.0 Results

As previously stated in the Methodology chapter, the participants' transcribed interviews were analysed using the model of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The six phases of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis model are: (1) familiarising yourself with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. The first two stages of familiarising yourself with the data and generating initial codes were explained in full in the methodological section and, therefore, will not be repeated below. Here, further detail will be given as to how the researcher applied the model of thematic analysis to the parent and EP data sets at stages three, four, five and six of the model, and the findings produced at each phase. Some detail about the process from the methodology section will be repeated for the purpose of clarity of reading. Parent and EP data sets were analysed separately.

4.1 Phase Three – Searching for Themes

In conducting this phase, the researcher read all the initial coded extracts identified at stage two and organised them under overarching potential themes. At this stage, potential sub-themes within overarching themes were also identified. Initial thematic maps were developed as visual representations of themes and sub-themes as seen in the previous chapter, Methodology. These have been summarised in a table on the following two pages:

Table 6 Initial Themes and Sub-Themes of Parent Data Set

Parent Data Set	
Possible Theme	Possible Sub Theme
Strengths of Dual Educational Placements	Positives Alternative Placement Positives Mainstream Placement Communication Choice/Options
Limitations of Dual Educational Placements	Negatives Alternative Placement Negatives Mainstream Placement Communication Consistency Planning/Information/Organisation Ethos
Improvements and Current Best Practice	Advice Improvements Best Practice
Educational Psychologist Involvement	Statutory
Influence of Type of SEN	Autism
Core Perceptions of Dual Educational Placement	Choice/Options Best of Both Worlds

Table 7 Initial Themes and Sub-Themes of Educational Psychologist Data Set

Educational Psychologist Data Set	
Possible Theme	Possible Sub Theme
Strengths of a Dual Educational Placement	Positives of Alternative Placement Positives of Mainstream Placement Influences on Success
Limitations of Dual Educational Placement	Negatives of Alternative Placement Concerns about Dual Educational Placement Influences on Failure of Dual Educational Placement Setting up a Dual Educational Placement Transport Continuity Ethos
Improvements and Best Practice	Improvements Preparation
Educational Psychologist Involvement	Options Transition Needs Miscellaneous
Influence of Type of Need	Autism
Core Perceptions of Dual Educational Placement	Experience of Both Worlds Family Motivation Inclusion Options

It should be noted that similar overarching themes and sub-themes identified for parent and EP data sets were coincidental, and not actively intended. The researcher approached the second set of data transcripts with an open mind and was prepared to notice different patterns in the data; however, it appeared that similar topics were present.

4.2 Phase Four - Reviewing Themes

The potential themes which had been identified by the researcher were then reviewed using two steps (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The first step involved the researcher reading the coded extracts under theme and sub-theme headings to judge whether the coded extracts formed a consistent pattern.

This activity resulted in amendments to the initial themes and sub-themes identified in the previous stage. In the parent data set, communication was mentioned by all participants as either being a negative or positive influence. Therefore, the researcher perceived that the level of importance placed on this aspect warranted '*communication*' being identified as an independent theme. The sub-theme '*planning/information/organisation*' was disbanded as there was not considered to be enough data extracts to support the sub-theme. The sub theme title of '*ethos*' was changed to '*non-inclusive attitude*' to more accurately represent the data extracts.

In the EP data set, several amendments were made to ensure the data analysis was more clear and concise. The extracts in the sub theme '*miscellaneous*' were either allocated to a theme or discarded as they were not representative enough of the data set. Sub themes under the theme heading '*limitations of dual education placement*' were reduced to three key areas, rather than seven, to reflect the most prominent patterns in the data set. A new theme, named '*aspects which influence the effectiveness of a dual educational placement*', was identified with the sub-themes of '*influence of SEN*', '*communication*' and '*organisation*' which were previously located under different theme headings but were now more appropriately analysed.

Within this first step of reviewing the themes, in order to strengthen the reliability of the analysis, the coded extracts within each theme were mixed. Then the theme titles and subthemes were written on a blank sheet of paper. The researcher then re-read each coded extract and placed them under the theme heading which seemed to fit best. Using this approach, the coded extracts were still placed under the same theme headings and this was viewed by the researcher as reinforcing the validity of theme selection.

This procedure was repeated again. However, this time a colleague of the researcher, who also worked in Children's Services, distributed the coded extracts under the sub-themes to determine inter-rater reliability of the data. This resulted in some coded extracts being eliminated because it was felt they deviated too much from the pattern of the majority of extracts under a sub-theme heading. The majority of coded extracts were placed by the second rater under the same headings as originally placed. This suggests that the data has a good inter-rater reliability.

Two new candidate thematic maps and tables were produced to reflect the changes made. The candidate thematic maps were illustrated in the previous chapter, Methodology. A summary of candidate themes and sub-themes for each data set are as follows:

Table 8 Candidate Themes and Sub-Themes of Parent Data Set

Parent Data Set	
Candidate Theme	Candidate Sub theme
Educational Psychologist Involvement	Statutory assessment advice
Communication	Links to themes of benefits and limitations of dual educational placements as well as attributed for success of dual educational placements
Influence of Nature of SEN	Autism
Core Perception of Dual Educational Placements	Choice/Options Experience of Both Worlds
Benefits of Dual Educational Placement	Positives about Alternative Placement Positives about Mainstream Placement
Limitations of Dual Educational Placement	Teaching staff's negative attitude towards inclusion Travel and transportation to alternative placement Consistency
Attributes for Success of a Dual Educational Placement	Advice, Improvements, Current best practice

Table 9 Candidate Themes and Sub-Themes of Educational Psychologist Data Set

Educational Psychologist	
Theme	Sub theme
Educational Psychologist Involvement	Identifying Options Identifying the Child's Needs Identifying the Individual Affect on the Child
Aspects which influence the effectiveness of a dual educational placement	Organisation Communication Influence of SEN
Influence of Nature of SEN	Autism
Core Perception of Dual Educational Placement	Parental difficulty accepting SEN Experience of both worlds
Benefits of Dual Educational Placements	Positives of Alternative Placements Positives of Mainstream Placements
Limitations of Dual Educational Placements	Travel difficulties to alternative placement Ineffective social integration at mainstream Lack of continuity and consistency
Improvements to dual education placements	Practical suggestions Research

The researcher then carried out the second step for reviewing themes that were identified, suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The researcher re-read the transcripts for each data set to judge the validity of the candidate themes and sub-themes by reflecting on how representative they were of the data set as a whole. This also ensured that no potential coding opportunities had been missed. The researcher discovered that the candidate themes and sub-themes for both the parent and EP participants did fit the data set.

4.3 Phase Five - Defining and Naming Themes

The researcher considered themes, sub-themes and coded data extracts individually and as representative of part of the data set. Simple working definitions were determined for each theme and time was taken to explore the relationship between the research findings and questions. At this point, the theme and sub-theme titles were checked to ensure they appropriately reflected the data extracts belonging to them. This was found to be the case. Themes and definitions were:

Table 10 Parent Data Set Theme Definitions

Theme	Definition
Educational Psychologist Involvement	Input that parents identified an EP has had with their child which they associate with their dual educational placement
Communication	Reference to any point at which knowledge or information is passed between any two individuals via any communication method
Influence of Type of SEN on a Dual Educational Placement	Reference to characteristics of any particular SEN which influences the experience of a dual educational placement
Core Perception of Dual Educational Placements	Illustration of parents' understanding of a dual educational placement which incorporates factors which motivated them to engage with this type of placement and underpins their beliefs about a dual educational placement
Benefits of a Dual Educational Placement	Observations of positive experiences associated with a dual educational placement
Limitations of a Dual Educational Placement	Observations of negative experiences associated with a dual educational placement
Attributes for Success of a Dual Educational Placement	Aspects which make a dual educational placement work or which would be a future improvement

Table 11 Educational Psychologist Data Set Theme Definitions

Theme	Definition
Educational Psychologist Involvement	Activities which EPs identified they had participated in or could participate in associated with dual education placement
Core Perception of a Dual Education Placement	The main reasoning that EPs give regarding dual educational placements
Influence of Type of SEN on a Dual Educational Placement	Reference to characteristics of any particular SEN which influences the experience of a dual educational placement
Benefits of a Dual Education Placement	Constructive, helpful and positive aspects of a dual educational placement
Limitations of a Dual Educational Placement	Aspects which challenge the effectiveness of a dual educational placement
Aspects which Influence Effectiveness of a Dual Educational Placement	Characteristics which are perceived to shape the nature of the experience of a dual educational placement Features which are considered important to implement effectively in order to have a positive experience of a dual educational placement
Improvements to Dual Educational Placements	Future considerations

4.4 Phase Six - Producing the Report

The findings from the thematic analysis procedure for the two data sets will be presented separately in the subsequent sections below. Findings will be reported and possible interpretations suggested and illustrated through presentation of the most reflexive data extracts.

4.5 Analysis of Findings

Analysis of the parent data set and EP data set are presented below. Identified themes are structured under the subject headings to which the researcher considered they might relate best. Themes and sub-themes are stated and supporting evidence is provided by the most representative coded extracts of that theme or sub-theme.

4.6 Educational Psychologist involvement with dual educational placements

This section denotes participant perspectives about the input and influence that Educational Psychologists' have had on the placement of children in dual educational provision.

4.6.1 As identified by parents

Theme - Educational Psychologist Involvement

All parents stated that they had involvement with an EP during the EP's statutory duties, namely statutory assessment of their child and annual reviews of their child's statement of special educational needs.

Sub-Theme - Statutory Assessment Advice

Providing advice to parents during the statutory assessment process about dual educational placements was input which parents identified as the main EP contribution. For example:

"Before she started school we had an Ed Psych assessment and the Ed Psych came round. She was the first person to suggest that it would be good for [child] to go to a mainstream school as well as special school" 28:30 (interviewee 6)

"It was the Ed Psych who thought she would benefit from being in a mainstream environment for the social side of things, hearing children talk all the time...and just being around local children" 60:63 (interviewee 6)

4.6.2 As identified by Educational Psychologists

No EPs interviewed reported that they had been involved in the decision to dual educate a child with SEN. However, most felt that a decision about educational placement was not their role and, therefore, it would not have been appropriate to have been involved. EPs noted that their involvement with a dual education placement had usually been on an individual case basis and most regularly when the placement was breaking down, or the child was transferring from primary school to secondary school.

Theme – Educational Psychologists Involvement in Dual Educational Placements

It was identified by the researcher that EPs perceived they had three key roles in dual educational placements: identifying the child's needs; identifying the placement options; and identifying the individual effect a dual educational placement would have on a child.

Sub-Theme – Identifying Needs

EPs stated a role they have or could have associated with dual educational placement is providing information about the child's area of difficulty and what is needed to remove barriers to learning for the child. EPs stated:

“One of the things I think is good about an EP role is that we tend to be very holistic about a child and we try and take into account, not just their learning and a presenting need on the face of it, we try and get into a lot what their physical needs might be, what their linguistic needs might be, what their social needs are as well as their medical and other needs and so the balance of a special school placement is a very delicate thing and I think that sometimes those discussions come about though parents or schools actually. As an EP we are not about placement, we are about need so that I would hope that my input, my reports, whatever it may be, indicate that these are the areas of need for the child and this is the level of severity, if you like, then it is up to placing officers, caseworkers and so forth to make decisions about where that goes” 90:101(interviewee 2)

“I certainly never thought it would be my job to identify schools for children whether it be mainstream or special, it’s about identifying need and what support is appropriate for that need, but not about naming schools” 42:45 (interviewee 8)

“The caseworker would quite often come to me and say I need updated advice about this child’s needs because we are looking at placement. That would be fine and I would then say what the needs were and would identify whether those needs could be met by that placement” 63:66 (interviewee 8)

Sub-Theme – Identify Options

EPs reported that they also perceived their role in dual educational placement as identifying the placement options for that child. EPs stated:

“I tend not to advise whether a dual placement is right or not, what I tend to do is give the parents the options, there are usually three options, there’s mainstream, there’s special school or there’s a dual placement” (interviewee 1)

“I would say that I’m involved in the discussions, but I don’t advise parents to go for one or the other or dual. I try to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of the three scenarios and leave it for them to decide really” 35:37 (interviewee 7)

Sub-Theme – Identify the Individual Affect on the Child

EPs noted that their role was to ensure that those involved with making the placement decision recognise the affect a dual educational placement would have on the child.

“It would be that question of what is this child going to gain from being in A) the specialist placement, what’s going to be different and valuable to them there, and that would have to be I guess maybe making the week less frenetic than it might be in a mainstream school, or it may be about opportunities to receive more intensive teaching with expertise that they weren’t going to be able to access in the mainstream and at the other side of it asking equally what are they going to gain from maintaining

that little hold in mainstream. What sort of relationships do they have with the other children there, how well are they supported, is it something that's moving them on socially" 264:272 (interviewee 6)

"First of all what's the benefit to the child, what would it look like, what would the problems be, what do we need to think about. That's really what I feel the EP's role should be" 104:108 (interviewee 5)

4.6.3 Similarities and differences between parent and EP perspectives

There appeared to be a difference between parent and EP responses relating to the point at which EPs become involved with dual educational placements. Parents reported that their child had contact with an EP as part of their statutory assessment process and any advice about their child's educational placement from the EP was received at this stage. EPs reported that they perceived that the majority of times they had become involved with a dual educational placement was when it was breaking down or a child was transferring from primary to secondary school.

Neither parents nor EPs suggested that EPs were the individuals who made the decision to place a child in dual education, and both referred to the EP role as providing advice about the child's individual needs and the benefits and limitations of different educational contexts. These findings may suggest that, although EPs are not the driving force behind the decision to dual educate a child, their input in an important contribution to the decision making process.

4.7 Factors important for shaping perceptions of dual educational placement

This section refers to participant perspectives about factors aspects which they think a dual educational placement is a good idea or not and whether or not it meets their child's SEN effectively.

4.7.1 As identified by parents

Theme – Communication

Communication was raised by all parents as important and related to a wide variation of experience; therefore, it assumes an independent theme here. However, connections can be made between communication and other themes which are highlighted below: benefits of dual educational placements; limitations of dual educational placements; and attributes for success. Parents referred to communication they have with the schools and the schools have with each other, communication with the local authority and communication with parents experiencing a similar situation to them. Both verbal and written forms of communication were discussed and are included in this theme.

Parents perceived effective communication as necessary for a positive experience of dual educational placement and identified it as required for this type of placement to succeed. For example:

“[one factor that has made the dual educational placement work is] the communication has been really good between the two schools...I’ve got a book that he goes to school with, if they have got any questions they write in it and it goes between all three places” 153:155 (interviewee 3)

“There has to be communication and continuity otherwise it isn’t going to work” 83 (interviewee 2)

Conversely, parents perceived that poor communication may result in a negative experience of dual educational placement, or the placement not working. For example:

“[the main challenge is] Communication really and saying what they were doing with her and not necessarily sharing it with the other school. It’s just getting into the mentality of she’s here for this time but she’s there then and the need to communicate” 130:132 (interviewee 6)

“[the main challenge is lack of] Information; we hardly got anything home from either school. He missed letters....I did turn up once and the whole class had gone; they’d gone away for two days and nobody had said anything” 214:217 (interviewee 5)

Some parents highlighted communication with the local authority as an issue.

“The main negative [of dual educational placement] would be lack of communication with the local authority” 194 (interviewee 2)

“I think the biggest challenge overall has been getting the correct information from the education department” 157:158 (interviewee 1)

Parents reported that communication with other parents at the alternative placement was not possible. It seemed that some parents perceived a lack of a school community and parental support network at this placement.

“When I’ve got a child with disabilities it is much harder for me to talk to parents from special school” 283:284 (interviewee 7)

4.7.2 As identified by Educational Psychologists

Theme – Aspects which Influence the Effectiveness of Dual Educational Placements

EPs expressed the two factors of organisation and communication as key to determining if an experience of dual educational placement will be deemed as effective.

Sub-Theme – Organisation

EPs expressed that a significant challenge to the effectiveness of a dual educational placement is how it has been initially implemented, specifically referring to ensuring clarity about the aims of the dual education placement and being explicit about how a child's needs are being met through this type of placement, in a way that they could not be met in either a mainstream or an alternative placement alone. EPs also referred to exit criteria and being clear as to whether the placement is foreseen to be long-term or an interim measure. EPs stated:

“Have clarity as to why you are going for a dual placement, and are we going for a dual placement that is for the duration of primary and secondary or is it something that is a clear focus, say prevention of exclusion or a language unit where you are trying obviously to maintain the child's placement. I think it's easier when there is a clear reason for doing it and you know what you are trying to achieve, because then it is easier to pull the package together. When I think it's more global, where you have the issue of a special school and a primary school the argument is that child X has difficulties coping with a mainstream placement, but would benefit from some aspects of it and would also benefit from some aspects of the special school. If there isn't a clarity about what it is you are trying to achieve, other than the fact that it seems a good idea to allow the child to benefit from both settings, then I think it is often difficult to get the package right, because there's lack of clarity about what you're trying to achieve” 72:86 (interviewee 5)

“Perhaps setting out the criteria for success, because at the present time we haven’t got anyone saying what a successful dual placement looks like” 149:150 (interviewee 6)

“I’ve often seen insufficient preparation... what’s critical is making sure that the setting the child’s going into is prepared properly so that the dual placement can work. 160:164 (interviewee 5)

“It is the efficiency of setting up and actually running those experiences so that they are truly positive and rich experiences and purposeful and not just challenging and stressful and unproductive. If you’re merely just putting the child into the school and it’s not organised and a rich experience then the actual purpose of doing it is lost” 60:65 (interviewee 4)

“I don’t think the objectives are set out with enough vigour in the first place... It’s difficult to monitor objectives when those objectives are not made clear. 179 (interviewee 7)

Sub-Theme – Communication

EPs perceived that effective communication can be important for ensuring a positive experience as well as disintegration of a dual educational placement.

“I know from the schools point of view you have to have a very good level of communication with the special school and the mainstream school” 151:152 (interviewee 8)

“When possible placements are described, the communication systems seem that they would be effective but after however long there are complaints that the communication system is not as effective as it should be, or as regular as it should be” 75:77 (interviewee 7)

“The problems I’ve seen there have been much more around communication about what we’re trying to do, so there’s been issues around the curriculum like, we

thought you were doing maths rather than we were doing maths, so we put so and so out to do some 1:1”173:175 (interviewee 5)

4.7.3 Similarities and differences between these perspectives

Parents and EPs agreed that communication is instrumental in ensuring that a dual educational placement is successful and effective in meeting the child’s SEN. They both noted that poor communication can result in a dual educational placement not working out for a child. Additionally, EPs perceived the organisation of the dual educational placement (here, relating to the initial set up of the placement and obtaining clarity about the reasoning and aims behind the placement) can also be attributed to the placement being perceived as successful or not.

4.8 Influence of a child’s SEN on perceptions of appropriateness of dual educational placements

This section details participants perceptions about the influence of the nature of a child’s SEN on the suitability of a dual educational placement.

4.8.1 As Identified by parents

Theme – Influence of Type of SEN on the Success of Dual Educational Placement

Most parents said they thought that the type of needs a child has would have an impact on how successful a dual educational placement would be but could not elaborate to say what type of SEN would gain most or least from a dual educational placement.

Sub-Theme - Autism

One parent gave the opinion that a dual educational placement might be most challenging for a child who has Autism. Although a point made by only one

participant, this was considered by the researcher as important and relevant to a research question. The parent stated:

“Someone on the Autistic Spectrum might struggle.....If you have got a child who likes routines then a dual educational placement with two different routines is even more difficult” 356 and 366:668 (interviewee 6)

4.8.2 As identified by Educational Psychologists

Theme – Influence of Type of SEN on the Success of Dual Educational Placement

EPs noted the importance of taking into account a child’s individual needs when considering their suitability of a dual education placement.

Sub-Theme - Autism

They highlighted particular concern pertaining to a child with Autism experiencing a dual educational placement due to the difficulties with change and preference for routine often associated with this diagnosis.

“The only children I am reluctant to shout about dual placement about are those on the Autistic Spectrum because I do think the stability is a big problem for them” (interviewee 1)

“When we’re talking about Autistic cases, that they may not deal with the change particularly well and regular change such as this may confuse them more” 102:105 (interviewee 7)

“I think in my cases the Autistic children who have found social inclusion difficult all the way through, removing them for a few days is not going to help that social inclusion” 167:169 (interviewee 7)

4.8.3 Similarities and differences between these perspectives

Both parents and EPs cited that a child whose SEN is defined by an Autistic diagnosis may struggle with a dual educational placement. This appeared to be connected with concerns over the ability of a child with this SEN: this is associated with a preference for routine and a predictable environment, and to cope with a lack of consistency that it was perceived a dual educational placement may present.

4.9 Perceived benefits and limitations of dual educational placements

This section presents participant perceptions relating to the advantages and disadvantages of a child with SEN attending a dual educational placement.

4.9.1 As identified by parents

Theme – Core Perception of Dual Educational Placement

Parents provided an insight into their underlying motivations for wanting their child to have a dual educational placement which seemed to relate to their underpinning beliefs about the dual educational placements. It appeared that these could be broadly categorised under the sub-themes of Options and Experience of Both Worlds.

Sub-Theme – Options

Parents perceived that a dual educational placement gave their child the opportunity to succeed in both settings and avoided the experience of wondering what might have been had they only attended one setting. Some considered the dual educational placement to provide the chance to be assessed in, and trial, each setting to determine which they would attend on a full-time basis in the future. For example, parents reported:

“It gives you three options then; mainstream, that middle of the road option and special education” 285:286 (interviewee 3)

“I knew if we started it that way we could monitor it and if it didn’t work out there were other options” 24: 25 (interviewee 2)

“They didn’t know how things were going to pan out for her educationally, so we thought that a dual educational placement would give us a foot in the door in both worlds because I didn’t necessarily want her to go through mainstream if she would be better off in special but also the thought of her going straight into special school without giving her a try in mainstream – it felt good for us really to give her the best shot and just see where she was. We also felt that with the dual placement that she would be in a position where she would be able to be assessed, not only by the mainstream school but by the special school so that at the end of her first year we would have a better idea of where she would be placed, whether in special or in mainstream with support” 268:271 (interviewee 1)

Sub-Theme - Experiences of Both Worlds

Parents perceived that the two placements offered by a dual educational placement meant that their child did not have to sacrifice the benefits provided by one placement for the benefits of the other and, therefore, had the best of both placements. They explained that each placement provided different experiences and a dual educational placement was perceived by these parents as avoiding the need to compromise.

“We looked into it and she needs to have social, she needs to interact with people of her own age because she’s got to see both sides of life. It’s a good idea that special schools are there and they do take them out into the world; I appreciate that, but there is a reality that in mainstream school you do see more and that’s what she needed. She needed both to be able to appreciate what she could get from both of them” 54:59 (interviewee 4)

“I would back dual placements to the hilt to let the children see both worlds and understand what the difference is and what the similarities are and make friends in both as well” 281:283 (interviewee 4)

“I think you can get a lot from mainstream you can’t get from special and the other way around” (interviewee 5)

“We decided to go for dual placement because I wanted her to have the best of both worlds” 238:240 (interviewee 2)

“He is getting the best of both worlds really, I strongly believe that” 177 (interviewee 7)

Theme - Benefits of a Dual Educational Placement

Parents reported that the strength of a dual educational placement came from having access to the positives offered at the separate settings. Therefore, positives of mainstream placement and positives of alternative placement were identified as sub-themes within the theme “strengths of dual educational placement”.

Sub-Theme – Positives of a Mainstream Placement

Parents identified that the mainstream placement provided the social aspect of education. They considered that the mainstream placement gave their children the opportunity to develop their social skills and competencies. In line with the theory of social learning, which suggests that individuals can learn by observing others, it was proposed by parents that peers within the mainstream school environment were positive role models for their child to copy. For example:

“At the mainstream school, they can provide the social side of things” 24 (interviewee 4)

“Socialising skills from the mainstream...he is learning to play and share with other children” 168:172 (interviewee 7)

“I think for my daughter her development has increased so much because in mainstream she can see all her friends doing things and she wants to do them and her speech has come on leaps and bounds” 88:91 (Interviewee 4)

Additionally, parents illustrated the thinking that, by attending a mainstream placement, their child may be more socially integrated into their local community. For example:

“The benefits to her [of attending mainstream] are that if she sees somebody in the street they know her and she may get some friends” 456:457 (interviewee 6)

“[The benefits of attending mainstream are] so that the local children know him” 254 (interviewee 5)

Parents stated that they perceived the mainstream placement to have a motivational influence for their children because the staff have higher expectations and the child has a desire to keep up alongside more able peers. For example:

“When [name] was at the bottom of the class [at mainstream] she had something to aim for” 197:198 (interviewee 2)

“Because of higher expectations the mainstream were able to achieve a lot more” 179:181 (interviewee 6)

Sub-Theme – Positives of an Alternative Placement

Parents expressed that the benefit of an alternative school placement was that it supported their child's learning by targeting teaching at the child's individual needs. For example:

“They [alternative placement] actually educate her needs, what level she's at because they are trained to do it....they bring education in to it in a way she can grasp” 33:34 and 94:95 (interviewee 4)

“Special needs I felt they knew how to teach him” 76 (interviewee 3)

Parents said that a benefit of the alternative placement was they knew that the staff could 'cope' with their child. For example:

"They [alternative placement] can cope with the days when they don't want to learn ...they are too ill" 34:36 (Interviewee 4)

"Another advantage of special school is that the staff go there knowing that is what their job is and they also have the mindset that this is our job, we're going to cope, there is no choice" 229:231 (Interviewee 6)

Parents also proposed practical advantages of the alternative placement with regards to the quality and quantity of resources available. For example:

"Class sizes are much smaller, staff ratio is excellent, they have all the facilities, like sensory rooms, their own swimming pool and IT facilities" 97:99 (interviewee 2)

"They [alternative placement] are also able to provide all the other extras like physio and speech and language therapy" 96:97 (interviewee 4)

"You have got the advantage that the special school is resourced appropriately....he's actually having a wonderful experience of having all the lovely fab equipment at the special school" 182:185 (interviewee 7)

Parents also perceived that the alternative placement benefited their child by allowing them the opportunity to mix with peers with whom they have more in common. For example:

"At the special school [name] doesn't feel different" 96:97 (interviewee 2)

"With the special needs she doesn't feel that she is the only one; i think that would be the best way of describing it" 93:94 (interviewee 4)

Theme - Limitations of Dual Educational Placements

Parents reported that limitations of a dual educational placement stemmed predominantly from three areas. The first related to a negative attitude towards inclusion from teaching staff. The second was the logistical aspect of the travel and transportation to the alternative placement. The third was a lack of consistency encountered by their child.

Sub Theme – Negative Attitude Towards Inclusion

The majority of parents who identified a negative attitude towards inclusion related it to their experiences at the mainstream placement. Parents proposed that a challenge faced at the mainstream placement was that teaching staff lacked the belief in their abilities to teach children with SEN and lacked belief that the child would be able to cope in a mainstream placement. For example:

“The [mainstream] didn’t feel they were achieving a lot because the gap was growing all the time....the confidence to do it wasn’t there in the mainstream” 181:182 and 232 (interviewee 6)

“I think the teacher in the mainstream doesn’t feel she is actually teaching him anything off the curriculum” 184:185 (interviewee 3)

“They [mainstream] didn’t want him to stay over lunch time because they thought that would be way too much for him, being in that bigger room with a lot of children” 192:193 (interviewee 5)

One parent expressed the view that the ethos of staff at both placements did not support inclusion. Although this was only expressed by one parent, this was perceived by the researcher to be an important and interesting aspect to consider. The parent stated that both placements showed:

“[The alternative educational placement] would like her to be there more rather than seeing how great it is that she can spend some time in the mainstream”

and “It really is ignorance of the benefits of mainstream” 157:159 and 162 (interviewee 6)

This parent also suggested that the impact of a non-inclusive attitude is a barrier to a dual educational placement succeeding. They stated that:

“If you’ve got the mentality that says this is great, this is wonderful, this is the way it should be, it will work. If you’ve got the mentality that says they should be in special school, we don’t want them here, but we will try because you have asked for it, but the slightest thing that goes wrong, it becomes a huge fight for parents. Our experience of talking to others is that the majority of children in special school are there because mainstream has failed. The reason they like special schools so much is because they cope without complaining and talk positively. It’s not because it’s better than mainstream but if they had good experience in mainstream they wouldn’t want to go to special” 374:383 (interviewee 6)

Sub-Theme – Travel Distance and Transport to an Alternative Placement

Parents cited the distance that their child has to travel to attend an alternative placement, and that they get there by transport provided by the local authority, as having negative consequences for them and their children. Parents noted that their child was excluded from attending extracurricular activities because of being collected from the placement at set times and that the long journey resulted in a long day for their child, leaving them tired.

“[A limitation of special school is] tiredness because he has to get on a bus at eight o’clock in the morning and he is not back until four so that’s a very long day” 191:192 (interviewee 7)

“You [child] can’t do after school clubs at special school because it is a long way” 108:109 (interviewee 2)

“That’s one of the challenges and the transport. If you don’t get the transport and the person who’s taking the child to school and the consistency there it’s very confusing for them” 87:89 (interviewee 2)

Sub-Theme - Consistency

Parents expressed that their child experiencing two placements, as in a dual educational placement, means that they do not have consistency. They noted that it was difficult for their children to retain and respond to the differing demands placed upon them by the two contexts. For example:

“I think there are limitations in that it is quite difficult to juggle two schools because you’ve got different teaching styles...in the special and mainstream they do look and run in very different ways, so I suppose you’ve got a bit of a lack of consistency” 149:152 (interviewee 7)

4.9.2 As identified by Educational Psychologists

Theme – Core Perception of Dual Educational Placements

This theme referred to EPs primary observations about the underpinning reasons a dual educational placement might be seen as a useful placement option.

Sub-Theme – Experience of Both Worlds

EPs made reference to dual educational placements providing children with ‘the best of’, or ‘experience of’, ‘both worlds’. A dual educational placement was suggested as an effective way of experiencing and benefiting from what each setting has to offer a child. EPs stated:

“It was kind of middle ground to have dual placement to sort out the educational side and the social side to have the best of both worlds” 69:70 (interviewee 1)

“It’s a continuum – the whole sort of dual placement thing I’m sure is a reasonable attempt to sample the two worlds” 221:222 (Interviewee 6)

Sub-Theme – Parents’ Difficulty Accepting SEN

Some EPs also considered dual educational placements to be an effective means for supporting parents who are in the process of coming to terms with their child’s SEN. EPs suggested that a dual educational placement may be beneficial for parents whose children have needs which are greater than can be catered for in a mainstream environment on a full-time basis, but who have not fully come to terms with this. It was thought that a dual educational placement may offer a transition period for parents to accept their child’s SEN and experience what an alternative placement has to offer, without making a commitment to it at the onset of the child’s educational career. EPs stated:

“I wonder sometimes whether dual placements are around parents who have not quite got to grips with their child’s need” 101:103 (interviewee 2)

“It’s probably been where there is a parent who has been struggling with the notion that it’s going to be special forever and have wanted mainstream in the first place and so there has been that sort of balance between the two” 80:83 (interviewee 6)

Theme – Benefits of a Dual Educational Placement

EPs expressed that the benefit of a dual educational placement is found in the positive experiences gained from attending the two individual settings of mainstream and alternative placement.

Sub-Theme – Positives of a Mainstream Placement

EPs cited that placement within a mainstream setting may benefit a child by supporting their social development. EPs reported that a mainstream placement afforded children with SEN social interaction opportunities that they may not get from

an alternative placement alone. EPs reported that children who are more able in the mainstream setting have the skills to facilitate positive interaction with a child with SEN and provide a peer group for them. Additionally, in line with Social Learning Theory, EPs suggest that children with SEN benefit from spending time in a mainstream placement as peers there provide positive role models from which they learn to copy socially appropriate behaviours and language. EPs stated:

“Two days a week she is at [mainstream] high school she has the social side of it, being included in her peer group”(interviewee 1)

“The individuals I’ve been involved with have been able to maintain social groups in the mainstream” 94:96 (interviewee 7)

“There were positives for the young person in relation to accessing a mainstream for much of the social development that was required” 18:20 (interviewee 5)

“Trying to give the children positive role models I guess, the social would be at the mainstream school because they would have people with improved communication skills.” 54:56 (interviewee 2)

“I think the mainstream for children to be with their peer groups and experience the range of stimulation and language....by going to mainstream they have opportunity to interact with children who have better language, better social skills” 52:57 (interviewee 4)

EPs stated that attending a mainstream placement may be beneficial for the child to be part of their local community. It was also suggested that placing a child with SEN in a mainstream school may have benefits for the school community as a whole, in that it may raise awareness of diversity and promote an inclusive society. EPs said:

“It allows the pupil to remain part of their community, and to access more age appropriate role models in different areas within the mainstream” 45:46 (interviewee 7)

“Another value which is for the community they are going in to as the teacher is having to adjust and the pupils are having to adjust and work alongside and actually there is value for everyone in the social learning opportunities” 44:50 (interviewee 2)

Sub-Theme – Positives of an Alternative Educational Placement

EPs frequently made reference to the specialist resources and training of staff at alternative placements as a significant benefit for attending this education setting, as well as the impact the latter point has on teacher’s ability to teach at an accessible level for a child; this results in a greater individualised education. EPs stated:

“A different set of resources, not just physical resources, but in the development of training for their staff, also, equipment and special educational needs resources that they may have and mainstream schools don’t [for example] hydrotherapy pool, sensory rooms....you’ve also got the specialism that a complex needs school can offer” (interviewee 1)

“So you get the specialist input from the special school. Smaller classes, high levels of expertise, high level of resourcing” 43:44 (interviewee 7)

“There was opportunity to have some curricular activities which were relatively tuned to that young person’s needs through the special school” 20:22 (interviewee 5)

Theme – Limitations of a Dual Educational Placement

EPs stated that the limitations of the dual educational placement are found in the three areas of: lack of continuity and consistency; ineffective social integration in the mainstream school placement; and travel difficulties to the alternative placement.

Sub-Theme – Lack of Continuity and Consistency

By definition, a dual educational placement means a child will experience two placements. The inconsistency and a lack of continuity this can lead to was

highlighted by EPs as an aspect which can present a challenge for the child attending a dual education placement. It appears that this may be connected to ineffective collaboration from those involved with the child and poor communication (the latter point will be addressed more thoroughly in the theme, 'aspects which influence the effectiveness of a dual educational placement'). EPs stated:

"The only thing I get a little bit concerned about is that the child doesn't have stability of being in one school. There's an unsettling factor of being in two different schools" (interviewee 1)

"You're not getting a cohesive education. You go there for that and you go there for that but there's no kind of joined up." 55:61 (interviewee 7)

"Danger that you don't feel a real member or either place where you are and I think that for children with high level needs, the sort of need that would warrant some sort of specialist provision, there's the possibility that they might be confused" (interviewee 7)

"I think it depends on the structure, it depends on the nature of the two placements and how similar and dissimilar they are. It is such a challenge for that young person to be able to cope with the different arrangements 55:59 (interviewee 5)

"Having access to lots of different schools and lots of different people and a lot of different approaches is obviously going to be incredibly difficult" 136:138 (interviewee 8)

Sub-Theme – Ineffective Social Integration and Social Isolation at the Mainstream Educational Placement

Interestingly, although EPs referred to the benefit of a mainstream placement as being the social aspect of education, they also highlighted it as a limitation. This limitation may highlight the importance of identifying when a child cannot access the social opportunities offered by the mainstream setting. EPs reported:

“The high school was seen as the social side of it but it rarely happened. It tended to be that the child came into the high school, allegedly for the social side, but the other children would include to a certain extent, but the child wasn’t integrated, it was definitely they were a separate entity. Other children looked after them but wasn’t really integrated into the life of the school and that can make it difficult to do”110:115 (interviewee 1)

“Sometimes I have seen them very much babied and treated very much in a way I wouldn’t want to see a child treated, it is a horrible way to describe it, but almost as if they were the class pet in a sense. The sense that we must look after X or Y.” 59:62 (interviewee 2)

“I think there is no doubt in mind that there have been many children who have been excluded in mainstream schools because the provision, the expertise, the understanding just haven’t been there for them and they can be just as excluded in a setting like that” 215:218 (interviewee 6)

Sub-Theme – Travel Difficulties to Alternative Placement

EPs made reference to the logistical and practical difficulties relating to the travel children have to experience when attending alternative placements. The main concerns seem to relate to the distance which they have to travel and inconsistency or unreliability of the transport staff. EPs expressed:

“I think a big issue for a lot of children with dual placements is the travel side as well because they are used to being able to walk to their local school and they then may be going for a 10 maybe 20 mile journey in a taxi with an unknown person every day, and these are very young children” 93:97 (interviewee 8)

“There’s often been nightmares around travel, taxis not turning up or people not turning up or staff not being available to support the child” 168:169 (interviewee 5)

4.9.3 Similarities and differences between these perspectives

The researcher considered that the themes identified in parent and EP data sets presented several commonalities. There seemed to be agreement between parents and EPs about the potential social benefits for a child with SEN spending some of the week in a mainstream placement. Parent and EP participants also expressed similar views about the benefits, in terms of access to specialist resources and targeted teaching, found at an alternative placement. Both participant groups highlighted travel difficulties to the alternative placement as a limitation. The two groups of participants also agreed that a lack of consistency experienced by a child, partly due to the very characteristic of a dual educational placement involving two educational settings, was a negative aspect to this educational option.

Parents and EPs did not seem to describe any views which particularly conflicted with each other; however, they did give some different responses to similar topics of discussion. An additional benefit parents noted from a mainstream placement was that they perceived that staff have higher expectations of their child; this acted as a motivational influence. Extra benefits which parents noted about an alternative placement are that their child is among peers with whom they have more in common and that the staff within this placement have the ethos that they are able and will cope with their child's needs. An additional challenge expressed by EPs about the mainstream aspect of the dual educational placement was the possibility that, despite being present, the child may not be fully socially integrated into a mainstream placement and, therefore, would feel excluded even if they were present.

There was some agreement between parents and EPs that a key reason for pursuing this type of placement would be to achieve the best of both experiences for a child. There was a difference found between one of the key reasons suggested for pursuing this type of placement. Parents stated that a main reason for them had been to keep their child's options open, in terms of having the opportunity to succeed in either environment and informing their future placement decisions. EPs considered that a dual educational placement may be sought when a parent is in a transition period of accepting their child's SEN.

4.10 Increase the effectiveness of dual educational placements

This section states the suggestions provided by participants that they perceive would enhance the effectiveness of a dual educational placement.

4.10.1 As identified by parents

Theme – Attributes of a Successful Dual Educational Placement

Parents identified aspects which had a positive impact on their experience of a dual educational placement, detailed below in the sub-theme 'current best practice'. Parents also elaborated by suggesting advice for other parents considering a dual educational placement and improvements which they perceived could support a successful dual educational placement in the future.

Sub-theme – Current Best Practice

Parents reflected that good communication and collaborative working are aspects of their experience of dual educational placements which they perceive to have been important for its success. Parents offered practical examples of how this was achieved:

“For a very long time we had meetings with mainstream and special school at nursery. We met quite a few times over the last year of nursery placement and they were well informed about his needs” 86:88 (interviewee 7)

“I think the biggest thing parents can do is to suss out the line of communication between the special school, the mainstream school and themselves. The three way communication must work or it will fall apart. It’s just a little thing but [child] has a little notebook and his teacher at [alternative placement], Monday to Wednesday writes what he’s done, the same happens at [mainstream placement] and we write out comments. This book stays in his school bag and it doesn’t move so it goes wherever he goes. It’s such a simple thing but it’s the most effective. There has

got to be some sort of communication established to make it really work” 207:214 (interviewee 7)

Sub-Theme - Improvements

Parent’s suggestions for improvements of dual educational placements broadly related to communication. For example:

“Communication between parents and both schools to make sure you’re all doing the same thing” 70:71 (interviewee 2)

“The correct information on dual placement, from the education department, prior to the placement, is made clear” 158:159 (interviewee 1)

“Parent support groups for those who have children attending dual educational placements” 157 (interviewee 2)

“A review magazine or review thing for parents whose children are in dual educational placements to read” 299:300 (interviewee 3)

Sub-Theme - Advice

The advice parents expressed for parents considering a dual educational placement for their child related to the two topics of effective communication and collaborative relationships with the staff at the two placements.

“Start a good relationship up so that they feel they can ring you and you can ring them” 228:229 (interviewee 3)

“Make sure you work with both schools and ask the special school what mainstream school they get on with” 201:202 (interviewee 7)

“Plan ahead, start asking questions, get the specialists involved” 141 (interviewee 4)

A parent also advised that preparation for the dual placement is important for its success. For example:

“I would tell them to go and visit as many schools as possible and find out what provision is available for children with special needs. Go and spend the day there. Take your child with you to meet the teachers” 147:149 (interviewee 2)

4.10.2 As identified by Educational Psychologists

Theme – Improvements to Dual Educational Placements

EPs made some practical suggestions, based on their own knowledge and experience of dual educational placements, about how to improve them. They also stated that further research is needed in this area to develop effective practice.

Sub-Theme – Practical Suggestions

EPs offered some practical suggestions for improving dual educational placements, based on their individual experiences. EPs stated:

“As an EP or as a teacher it’s really useful to go and see the child in both settings, because sometimes you see a very different child. It can be interesting to see how the child behaves and how they play off one setting against another” 120:123 (interviewee 1)

“Perhaps some of the children [from the mainstream school] should go along to the special school to see what they do there with the dual placed child” 127:129 (interviewee 1)

“A thing that works really well for the child at [mainstream] is his TA that works with the child most of the time, goes along to the special school with him so she knows exactly what they’re doing and she knows what he does in mainstream, so

that's working really really well. It's having that continuity. Someone who knows what's going on in both places" 129:133 (interviewee 1)

"In terms of including a child within a setting, that can be really really hard when they are not there all the time and children make other friendship groups. So it can be a problem. It's sometimes useful to set up like a peer buddy system for the child, or something along the line of a circle of friend's type arrangement. That's worked quite well for me in the past with dual placed children" 125:127 (interviewee 1)

Sub Theme – Research

EPs reported that they did not think dual educational placements had been researched thoroughly and therefore the practice was not evidence based. They highlighted that research into the children's perceptions of the dual educational placement would be valuable. EPs stated:

"There is a certain lack of accountability and evaluation with a lot of SEN procedures. It's like anything we do, it should be evidence based; we can't just make things up. It does need to be evidence based because it's children's lives and children's education you're talking about. So this should be the same thing, it should be driven by the research behind it" 302:305 (interviewee 8)

"It would be interesting to see the child's views about dual placement actually" 123:124 (interviewee 2)

"It would be interesting to find out what the children themselves thought when they were in adulthood. Whether they felt it was the right option for them, whether they had a positive experience" (interviewee 8)

4.10.3 Similarities and differences between these perspectives

A difference between parents and EPs data was their suggestions for future improvements. Parents focused on doing more of what they reported as already working: increasing communication and ensuring there is a collaborative relationship

between the two schools and parents. EPs proposed a few practical suggestions, some of which are likely to have the outcome of increasing communication and a collaborative relationship between the two placements. Secondly, EPs suggested that further research into the area of dual educational placement would be necessary to deliver an evidence-based practice.

4.8 Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter explained the outcomes of the thematic analysis process and reported the themes identified by the researcher from the two data sets, parent and EP. There were seven overarching themes identified in the parent data set which are as follows:

- Educational Psychologist involvement;
- Communication;
- Influence of type of SEN;
- Core perceptions of a dual educational placement;
- Benefits of a dual educational placement;
- Limitations of a dual educational placement;
- Attributes for success of a dual educational placement.

A key finding within this data set was the lack of parents reporting EP involvement in their child's dual educational placement, despite it being considered beneficial by the parent who had experienced involvement from an EP. Communication was discovered as important for shaping parents' perceptions of whether or not a dual educational placement is a good option and was also highlighted as an area which, depending on its standard, can influence the perceived effectiveness and success of a dual educational placement. Parents perceived that individual differences between a child's SEN should be taken into account when considering a dual educational placement.

Benefits of a dual educational placement were discovered in the parent data set to reside in the two domains of mainstream and alternative placements. Parents reported that the benefits of a mainstream placement were the provision of opportunities for their child to develop their social competencies and for their child to

be socially integrated into their local community. They also suggested that a mainstream placement would have a motivational impact on their child. Parents reported that the benefits of an alternative school placement were the teaching their child received there and the staff's ability to 'cope' with their child's SEN. They noted that a further advantage of an alternative placement was the access it gave their child to a wide range of resources. Parents also perceived that an alternative placement was useful for facilitating friendships with peers with whom they may have more in common. Limitations of a dual educational placement, suggested by parents, referred to the areas of a lack of consistency for the child, the distance a child has to travel to attend the alternative placement and negative attitudes of school staff, particularly in a mainstream setting, towards SEN.

Parents suggested that, overall, a dual educational placement is a valuable option and many viewed it as an opportunity to experience the 'best of both worlds'.

There were six overarching themes identified in the EP data set which as follows:

- Educational Psychologist involvement;
- Aspects which influence the effectiveness of a dual educational placement;
- Core perceptions of a dual educational placement;
- Benefits of a dual educational placement;
- Limitations of a dual educational placement;
- Improvements of a dual educational placement.

Key findings within this data set were that EPs suggested that their involvement in dual educational placement related to the three identification domains of placement options, SEN of the child and relationship between the child's SEN and this nature of educational placement. EPs also suggested that the effectiveness of a dual educational placement is influenced by communication and additionally how it is organised. Improvement suggestions given by EPs were to conduct more research in the area of dual educational placements so that their practice is evidence based. They also provided practical suggestions for improving continuity within the mainstream placement social integration. EPs reported that they thought a child's

individual SEN would influence the effectiveness of dual educational placement and highlighted reservations about a child with a diagnosis of ASD managing in this nature of placement.

Benefits of a dual educational placement were also discovered in the EP data set to reside in the two domains of mainstream and alternative placements. EPs suggested that a mainstream placement is advantageous because it provides a child with social skills development and social integration opportunities. An alternative placement was viewed as useful by EPs because of the resources, specially trained staff and targeted teaching that can be afforded to children there. EPs reported the limitations of a dual educational placement were a lack of consistency and continuity a child would experience, travel and transport difficulties to the alternative placement and the possibility of social exclusion, should a child with SEN not be able to access the social opportunities a mainstream placement.

Overall, EPs viewed a dual educational placement as valuable for children with SEN as they perceived it to offer an educational placement option should parents find it difficult coming to terms with their child's SEN. EPs also proposed that a dual educational placement may be a method by which a child can experience the 'best of both worlds'.

The key findings of parent and EP data, outlined in the summary of this chapter will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5: Discussion.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.0 Discussion

This research explored the perceptions of dual educational placements held by parents who have had experience of their child receiving this category of education and the perceptions of dual educational placements held by EPs who have encountered this type of education during their practice. In this chapter, findings of this research will be discussed in relation to both the research questions and previous research pertaining to this area, which were discussed in Chapter 2. Findings from this research will also be considered, relating to the researcher's constructivist epistemological position and then to the previously suggested theoretical underpinnings of this research and additional theoretical interpretations of the findings which appear relevant. Here, the critique of the methodology will be acknowledged. Implications for further research and for the area of dual educational placements will be considered. Then the research, in relation to its participants and stake holders, will be reported. Next, the possible implications of the research findings on EP practice will be presented. Finally, before concluding the research, the researcher will offer a reflective review of their learning throughout the research process.

5.1 Commentary on Findings

Overall, the findings of this research suggested that parents and EPs perceived a dual educational placement to be valuable as it is thought to offer options, support for parents having difficulty accepting their child's SEN and experience of 'the best of both worlds'. Some benefits and limitations suggested relating to a dual educational placement were systemic factors of communication, consistency and organisation referring to the child experiencing two placements. Other benefits and limitations concerning a dual educational placement were linked to the separate placements. Benefits were reported to be social advantages offered at a mainstream placement and the teaching and resources offered at an alternative placement. Limitations of the mainstream placement were considered to be unsuccessful social integration, a negative attitude of teaching staff towards inclusion and the staff's lack of confidence in their ability to 'cope' with a child with SEN. Limitations of the alternative educational placements were said to be the impact of travel and transport difficulties to and from the placement. Both parents and EPs reported that they perceived it

important to consider individual differences between children with SEN before educating them in dual educational placement. They also suggested that a child diagnosed as being on the Autistic Spectrum may find this type of placement especially difficult. EPs noted that they had previously been involved with dual educational placements through identification of options, needs and the individual effect of the placement on a child, notably when a placement was breaking down or a child was moving on to secondary education. Parents saw EP involvement as predominately relating to statutory duties. A few parents also gave accounts of EP involvement with their child's dual educational placement through advice given during the statutory process and reported it to have been a positive experience. These findings will be explored in more detail below.

Here, subject headings referring to key themes, themes, sub-themes and important information discovered in this research will be presented below parent and EP perceptions headings. The findings of this research will be discussed in relation to the research questions and to previous literature on the topic of educational placement of children with SEN, presented in Chapter 2.

5.1.1 Educational Psychologist Involvement with Dual Educational Placements

Parent Perceptions

All parents reported that an EP had been involved with their child during a statutory assessment process and other statutory duties such as annual reviews of their child's statement of SEN. However, the majority of parents did not report that an EP was involved with their child's dual educational placement.

One parent noted that the EP was instrumental in raising their awareness of the option of a dual educational placement, as well as providing advice about the placement benefits for the individual child; for example, it was stated that the EP had advised that placement in a mainstream setting would allow a child to maintain links with their local community and would benefit them socially. This parent considered EP involvement to have been a positive experience. In line with this research finding, previous literature about dual educational placements reported that parents found

advice provided by professionals in the process of decision making about their child's educational placements made them feel more supported (Flewitt and Nind, 2007).

Educational Psychologist Perceptions

The researcher considered that EPs perceived their involvement with dual educational placements as being greater than that reported by parents. EPs suggested that their involvement fell into three categories, which were as follows:

- Firstly, EPs noted that they had played a role in identifying and sharing placement options, including dual educational placement, with parents and other professionals such as SEN caseworkers. This involved highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of different educational placements.
- Secondly, EPs suggested they had been central to identification of a child's SEN and the required support to meet those needs. It was expressed that this had involved viewing the child holistically to determine the area and severity of need.
- Thirdly, EPs stated they had involvement in identifying the relationship between a dual educational placement and a child's individual SENs and, therefore, the individual effect of the placement on a child. This was said to entail examining the detail of the child's SEN and support available to meet these from a dual educational placement, and offering a professional opinion about the benefits and limitations of this educational placement in comparison to a mainstream or alternative placement alone.

All EPs were keen to clarify that they do not perceive themselves to be involved in decisions about educational placements and the majority attribute this role to SEN caseworkers.

5.1.2 Factors Important for Shaping Perceptions of Dual Educational Placements

Parent Perceptions

In research about dual educational placement, Willson (2006) reported that effective communication was consistently related to a successful placement and lack of communication to break down of placement. Similar findings were reproduced in this research with all parents making reference to communication being the main contributing factor for a positive or negative experience of a dual educational placement. Here, parents made reference to communication between the schools and themselves, as well as between the two educational placements. Parents referred to both written and verbal communication.

A difficulty faced by some parents in this research was poor communication and informed feeling of being ill-informed by the local authority. Flewitt and Nind (2007) noted in their research on dual educational placements that parents also struggled to obtain information about educational placement options for their child from professionals and, particularly, the local authority.

It was noted in this research that parents perceived a lack of a support network for themselves as a limitation of the dual educational placement. Parents emphasised that they perceived themselves as being particularly isolated from parents of other children attending the alternative placement.

Educational Psychologist Perceptions

The researcher suggests that EP participants also perceived communication as important to determine if a dual educational placement is thought a success or not. EPs perceived communication between the three parties of parents, mainstream and alternative placement as a challenge in a dual educational placement. Several EPs noted the importance of developing clear communication systems from the onset of the placement and ensuring they are maintained throughout.

Additionally, EPs in this research proposed that effective organisation is an important factor for determining if a dual educational placement is deemed a success or failure. EPs reported that dual educational placements are often informally and poorly organised, and noted that this is an area which must be addressed to ensure that a child receives optimum benefit from this nature of placement. It was stated that often the SEN, which each placement is fulfilling, and the aims of each placement are not made explicit and there is a lack of consideration about the long-term plan for a child's educational placement. EPs also expressed that there was a lack of entrance and exit criteria for this type of placement.

5.1.3 Influence of a Child's SEN on Perceptions of the Appropriateness of a Dual Educational Placement

Parent Perceptions

Parents suggested in this research that individual characteristics of a child's SEN are important to consider when contemplating a dual educational placement. This is congruent with the proposal made by Croll and Moses (2000) that individual differences between children with SEN should be considered when deciding what type of educational placement would best meet a child's SEN. One parent hypothesised that a child with Autism may struggle with the variations between placements.

Educational Psychologist Perceptions

In line with the findings in parent data, EPs also noted that success of a dual educational placement is influenced by a child's SEN. In research by Shah (2007), it was suggested that children with SEN should have the opportunity to attend mainstream or alternative placements, with decisions being made based on the child's individual strengths and limitations (Stinson and Lang, 1994). A number of EP participants noted that they may be reluctant to identify a dual educational placement as an option for children who have been diagnosed as being on the Autistic Spectrum because their identified SEN often means that they find it difficult to cope with change.

5.1.4 Perceived Benefits and Limitations of a Dual Educational Placement

Findings will be presented, for clarity, under the two headings of 'Benefits of a Dual Educational Placement' and 'Limitations of a Dual Educational Placement'.

Benefits of a Dual Educational Placement

Parent Perceptions

In this research, parents spoke about three main benefits of their child attending the mainstream placement aspect of the dual educational placement which were as follows:

- It provided the child with an opportunity to feel socially integrated into their local community which is in line with findings of previously identified literature (Flewitt and Nind, 2007; Giddens, 1997; Norwich, 2008; Pitt and Curtin, 2004 and Willson, 2006). Parents perceived that the mainstream placement offered their child the chance to get to know local children (Willson, 2006).
- It was identified by the researcher that parents also perceived the mainstream educational placement as providing their child with the opportunity to develop their social competencies by being in the company of, observing and copying children without SEN. Therefore, peers not deemed to have SEN, within a mainstream placement, were considered to be positive role models.

This aspect was not in line with previous literature as, conversely, it identified that a mainstream placement can be socially isolating for children with SEN (Corbett, 2000; Fredrickson and Cline, 2002; Norwich 2008) and many experience bullying from peers, as well as staff (Pitt and Curtin, 2004). In previous studies, in which participants were individuals deemed to have SEN, who were or had been in various types of educational placement, none of them identified the mainstream setting as providing positive role models for social interaction (Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004). An explanation for this may be incongruence between perceptions of educational

placements of individuals with SEN and their parents. It could also relate to a variation between experience of a dual educational placement at a primary and secondary school level. In previous literature, a bias towards investigation of secondary educational placement was apparent but, in this research, parent participants all had children of primary school age. This may suggest that the social benefits afforded to a child with SEN at a mainstream educational placement vary depending on the level at which they are being educated, primary or secondary.

Several parents suggested that the mainstream educational placement had a motivational influence on their child in terms of their learning, stating that 'they had something to aim for' and that there were 'higher expectations' in this placement. Shah, Travers and Arnold (2004) support this perception as they found that their participants suggested that attending a mainstream placement was motivational due to referencing their own progress against that of non-disabled peers.

In this research parents' spoke about four main benefits of their child attending an alternative placement:

Parents in this research noted that staff in alternative placements appeared better trained and, as such, are able to offer quality targeted teaching opportunities. In line with previous investigations, greater differentiation of work and a slower pace of learning were also identified as benefits of an alternative placement (Pitt and Curtin, 2004; Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004 and Shah, 2007). Willson (2006) found that, in her research, a number of parents had sought an alternative placement alongside a mainstream placement for their child with SEN to cater for their learning. Parents in the same study perceived that staff within a mainstream placement lacked the knowledge of SEN and curriculum differentiation which staff were said to demonstrate at alternative placements.

In this research, a number of parents referred to the ability of staff in an alternative placement to 'cope' with their child's SEN, noting a more accepting and understanding attitude of staff towards their children, as a benefit of an alternative placement. Norwich (2008) and Pitt and Curtin (2004) noted that, within an

alternative placement, staff exhibit a more positive attitude towards children with SEN and afford them greater independence.

In line with findings from Shah's (2007) research, parents in this research suggested the specialist support, resources and facilities - such as physiotherapist, speech and language therapists and hydrotherapy pool - are benefits to attendance at an alternative placement. In research by Runswick-Cole (2008), it was suggested that the pragmatic advantages of alternative placements moved parental participants from preferring a mainstream placement to an alternative placement. It has also been noted that professionals working with children with SEN experience tension between providing an inclusive education for children with SEN in a mainstream setting and the practical advantages afforded in an alternative placement (Croll and Moses, 2000).

A number of parents in this research identified the alternative placement as a socially supportive environment, suggesting that it gave their children the opportunity to mix with peers with whom they had more commonalities. Several parents noted that the alternative placement allowed their child with SEN to develop awareness that they 'are not the only one'. Shah, Travers and Arnold (2004) found that their participants suggested an alternative placement as being instrumental in encouraging them to be themselves, develop their personal identities and provide them with positive role models.

Educational Psychologist Perceptions

In this research, EPs spoke about two main benefits for a child attending a mainstream placement part of the time, which were the following:

- In line with parent opinion in this research, EPs suggested that, by attending a mainstream placement for part of the time, a child will be able to maintain links with peers within their local community. EPs also noted that promoting inclusion within a school environment has a positive influence on those children not deemed to have SEN, by raising their awareness of diversity. It was proposed that this may have the effect of encouraging a more socially inclusive community. In line with findings of this research, Giddens (1997)

suggested that attendance at a mainstream placement for children with SEN is important for a socially inclusive society and Pitt and Curtin (2004) found their participants stated it to be essential preparation for the real world.

- In agreement with parent perceptions in this research, EPs suggested that children with SEN would be able to access positive social development opportunities in a mainstream placement; because they would be able to interact with and learn from peers not deemed to have SEN, they could experience the modelling of appropriate behaviours and language.

Educational Psychologists, similar to parents, identified that a benefit of an alternative educational placement is the specialist resources available; this is in line with findings of Shah's research (2007) and trained staff. EP participants, like parents, noted that better trained staff resulted in a more appropriate education as they are more able to differentiate the curriculum to meet a child's SEN.

Limitations of a Dual Educational Placement

Parent Perceptions

In this research, parents spoke about three main limitations of their child attending a dual educational placement, which were the following:

- Several parents noted a negative attitude presented by school staff, particularly within a mainstream placement, as a limitation of a dual educational placement. Parents perceived that teaching staff in mainstream placements lacked the confidence and belief in their own abilities to teach children with SEN, and often could not identify the progress the children were making in the placement as it was not at such a rapid pace as peers not deemed to have SEN.
- One parent in this research suggested that, in their perception, both mainstream and alternative placements can be accused of not realising the

benefits for a child with SEN of attending a mainstream placement. This parent noted that a non-inclusive attitude presented by staff can be a precursor to the mainstream part of a dual educational placement not succeeding. This finding is supported by Willson (2006) who noted that attitudes of school teachers have a significant effect on whether or not an educational placement succeeds and if a child with SEN is accepted by their peers.

- A further limitation identified by a number of parents was the distance their child travels to the alternative placement. They noted that it was a tiring experience for their child. Shah, Travers and Arnold (2004), in their previous study, also found their participants reported challenges in terms of travel and transport. Here, parent participants also perceived inconsistency of the transport supplied for their child to attend an alternative placement as a challenge for their child.
- Several parent participants in this research proposed that the lack of consistency experienced by their child attending a dual educational placement as a limitation. They noted that the two different school cultures, teaching styles and behavioural expectations, amongst other differences, were a challenge for their child to manage. Parental concern pertaining to consistency that can be achieved with a dual educational placement was also identified by Willson (2006).

Educational Psychologist Perceptions

In this research, it was discovered that EPs perceive three main areas of limitation of a dual educational placement, which were as follows:

- The first limitation of a dual educational placement relates to the possibility of ineffective social integration at a mainstream placement. EPs highlighted the importance of identifying if a child with SEN is not able to benefit from the social aspects of a mainstream placement. EPs noted that they had observed cases where a child was not integrated socially in a mainstream setting and

were instead often 'looked after' or 'babied' by more able peers. This is in line with findings from previous research which suggest that a mainstream placement can be socially isolating for children with SEN (Corbett, 2000; Fredrickson and Cline, 2002; Norwich 2008).

- The second limitation EPs conveyed about a dual educational placement, in line with parent concerns, is a lack of continuity and consistency for a child. EPs often linked this challenge with poor communication between the two placements and a lack of collaborative working. EPs noted concerns that a child may feel unsettled by attending two educational placements and not receive a consistent education.
- The third limitation suggested by EPs about a dual educational placement is the distance a child with SEN has to travel to receive their education within an alternative placement, as well as a reported lack of consistency often found with the transport service. This limitation is also similar to that identified by parent participants of this research and previous findings of Shah, Travers and Arnold (2004) detailed above.

5.1.5 Increasing the Effectiveness of Dual Educational Placements

Parent Perceptions

In relation to increasing the effectiveness of dual educational placements, it was discovered that parents spoke about current best practice, suggested future improvements and offered advice for parents considering dual educational placement.

Parents who perceived their child's dual educational placement to be a success attributed this to effective communication and collaborative working primarily between the three parties of parents, mainstream and alternative educational placements. They noted that provision of a school link book, in which all parties write to communicate with one another, holding regular meetings and having a consistent adult who attends both placements with a child, promotes consistency and

communication, increasing the effectiveness of the placement. Effective collaboration and communication have also been previously recognised as attributes of a successful dual educational placement by Willson (2006).

Unsurprisingly, those parent participants who seemed less satisfied with the level of collaborative working and communication between the three parties of parents, mainstream and alternative placement, suggested that future improvement in these two domains would increase the effectiveness of a dual educational placement.

Possibly, and perhaps predictably, it was reported that the advice parents would give to prospective parents of children with SEN attending dual educational placements is to ensure that they establish a positive rapport with the two educational placements to aid communication and collaborative working.

Educational Psychologist Perceptions

In relation to increasing the effectiveness of dual educational placements, the researcher found that EPs offered practical suggestions to increasing the effectiveness of dual educational placements, based on their experiences of being involved with placements of this nature. The suggestions related to strategies for increasing the continuity of the dual educational placement and promoting social inclusion, particularly within a mainstream setting.

EPs also expressed the view that further research is warranted around dual educational placement to ensure that this placement option is evidence-based. In relation to conducting further research into the area of dual educational placements, EPs proposed that eliciting the child's views on dual educational placement would be of benefit to determine what is required to make them more effective.

5.1.6 Overall Perceptions of a Dual Educational Placement

Findings discussed here relate to the overarching aim of this research investigation: to determine what fundamental perceptions of a dual educational placement are held by the two participant groups.

Parent Perceptions

Parent's core perceptions of a dual educational placement seemed to reside in two ideas, discovered by the researcher, which were 'options' and 'best of both worlds'.

Several parents expressed that, when their child began their education, they were uncertain which type of placement would best meet their child's SEN; therefore, by attendance at a dual educational placement, their child could receive the benefits, and be assessed and monitored in both a mainstream and alternative placement. This was thought to allow parents the option of either placement when considering their child's future placement, for example, at secondary education. Flewitt and Nind (2007) also noted that parent participants combined mainstream and alternative placement services to try both settings to inform future decisions they make about educational placement for their child. They also reported parents considered that attending two educational placements would mean that one placement would make up for the inadequacies of the other (Flewitt and Nind, 2007).

The researcher found that a number of parents noted that a dual educational placement allowed their child to 'see both sides of life', and parents perceived that a dual educational placement balances the benefits and limitations presented from both educational placements giving children the 'best of both worlds'. Flewitt and Nind (2007) and Willson (2006) also found in their research that parents used the term 'best of both worlds' to describe a dual educational placement. Flewitt and Nind (2007) reported that their participants had said that it would be difficult for one setting alone to provide everything their child with SEN needed, but a dual educational placement provides the best available from both.

Educational Psychologist Perceptions

It was recognised that EPs perceived there to be two basic reasons for a child with SEN to find they are attending a dual educational placement, which are as follows:

- A number of EPs suggested that, in their experience, dual educational placement may often have originated from parents' difficulty in accepting their

child's SEN and the level of support which they require. It was perceived that a dual educational placement had been a compromise while parents were in a transition period of accepting and understanding their child's SEN.

- Several EPs, in line with parent views, suggested that a dual educational placement provides an opportunity for a child with SEN to experience the benefits of both placements. EPs proposed a dual educational placement as being a middle ground which provides access to 'the best of both worlds' which is in line with previous findings (Flewitt and Nind, 2007; Willson, 2006). One EP also used the metaphor of a dual educational placement being in the middle of a continuum of educational placements to meet a child's SEN. This latter suggestion is akin to the continuum of special educational provision detailed in Chapter 2: Literature Review (Norwich, 2008).

5.1.7 Similarities and Differences between Parent and Educational Psychologist Perceptions of Dual Educational Placements

The researcher considered that the themes identified in parent and EP data sets presented a number of commonalities. There seemed to be agreement between parents and EPs about the potential social benefits for a child with SEN spending some of the week in a mainstream placement. Parent and EP participants also expressed similar views about the benefits, in terms of access to specialist resources and targeted teaching, found at an alternative placement. Both participant groups highlighted travel difficulties to the alternative placement as a limitation. The two groups of participants also agreed that a lack of consistency experienced by a child, partly due to the very characteristic of a dual educational placement involving two educational settings, was a negative aspect to this educational option. In connection with their concerns over lack of consistency, both parents and EPs cited a child, whose SEN is defined by an autistic diagnosis, struggling with a dual educational placement. There was some agreement between parents and EPs that a key reason for pursuing this type of placement would be to achieve the best of both experiences for a child. Both parents and EPs cited effective communication as being a key feature to a dual educational placement being a positive experience and highly beneficial.

Parents and EPs did not seem to describe views which particularly conflicted with each other; however, they did give some different responses to similar topics of discussion. When explaining what makes a dual educational placement effective or challenging, parents suggested a negative attitude towards inclusion from teaching staff whereas EPs highlighted how the placement is organised. An additional benefit from a mainstream placement noted by parents was that they perceived that staff have higher expectations of their child and that this acts as a motivational force. Further benefits suggested by parents were that, at an alternative placement, their child was among peers with whom they may have more in common, as well as the attitude of staff that they can cope with their child's needs. An additional challenge expressed by EPs about the mainstream aspect of the dual educational placement was the possibility that, despite being physically present, the child may not be fully socially integrated into a mainstream placement and, therefore, would feel excluded even if they were present. There were differences identified between the key reasons suggested for pursuing this type of placement. Parents stated that a main reason for this had been to keep their child's options open in terms of having the opportunity to succeed in either environment and informing their future placement decisions. EPs described that a dual educational placement may be sought when a parent is in a transition period of accepting their child's SEN. The final difference between parents' and EPs' data was their suggestions for future improvements. Parents focused on doing more of what they identified as currently working: increasing communication and ensuring there is a collaborative relationship between the two schools and parents. EPs proposed a few practical suggestions, some of which are likely to have the outcome of increasing communication and a collaborative relationship between the two placements. Secondly, EPs proposed that further research into the area of dual educational placement would be necessary to deliver an evidence-based practice.

5.2 Findings in a Theoretical and Epistemological Context

This exploratory research into parent and EP perceptions about dual educational placements has generated a wide range of findings which cannot be attributed to any

one theoretical framework alone. Here, many of the main findings from this research will be considered in relation to various theoretical underpinnings.

Most in line with a social model of disability, the educational placement option of a dual educational placement for a child with SEN appears to oppose a within child deficit/medical model of disability and proposes environmental differentiation to meet a child's individual needs. As such, the option of a dual educational placement provides acknowledgement that the systems a child experiences will have an impact on their development. It may be claimed that Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model of Human Development could provide a basis from which to interpret many of the findings of this research. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that an individual must be viewed within their ecological context, which is described to consist of four levels, namely: microsystem; mesosystem; exosystem; and macrosystem. A microsystem is theorised as being an individual's immediate environment and, therefore, in the case of a child attending a dual educational placement, this is most likely to consist of three domains: their family home; mainstream educational placement; and alternative educational placement.

Pellegrini and Bjorkland (1998) suggested that a child's functioning in one microsystem, will be affected by what happens in another microsystem. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), this relationship between microsystems is referred to as the mesosystem. It is proposed by the researcher that parent and EP participants in this research identified that quality of the mesosystems for a child experiencing a dual educational placement (identified as communication, organisation, collaborative working and consistency between the three microsystems of parents, mainstream and alternative placements) was fundamental for determining how effective a dual educational placement was for a child with SEN. These mesosystems were highlighted by parents and EPs as structures which, with improvement, may increase the effectiveness of a dual educational placement.

Parents' and EPs' fundamental perceptions of the function of a dual educational placement may be said to rest on the concept that an interaction of the benefits provided by the two Microsystems of 'social aspects at mainstream' and 'resources and education at alternative placements' would meet a child's SEN more effectively

than one placement alone; hence, reference to a dual educational placement as ‘the best of both worlds’.

EP involvement is often distant from the child’s immediate environment but is influential on the child’s microsystem through advice EPs provide to parents and other professionals, as well as identification of a child’s needs. Therefore, their involvement may be deemed part of the child’s exosystem.

It was not found that parents or EPs explicitly made reference to the macrosystems of the child’s environment, such as the dominant values and beliefs of society presented by political leaders. It is suggested by the researcher that these are likely to be linked to the attitude reported by parents: that school staff in the mainstream placement lack the ability to teach children with SEN and not are able to ‘cope’ with children who have SEN.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Model of Human Development corresponds with the constructivist ideas which suggest that an individual’s attitude and thoughts are created by their cultural, institutional, professional, personal histories and intellectual environments (Foucault, 1969). It is proposed that Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Model of Human Development and the constructivist epistemological position taken in this research can be united to argue the possibility that parent and EP thoughts and knowledge about dual educational placements, presented in this research, will have been constructed through individual experience of their own ecological systems throughout time. The critical constructivist, Kincheloe (2005), noted that it is important to unite logic and emotion in the process and production of knowledge. It may be inferred that the decision to educate a child with SEN in a dual educational placement is representative of this; particularly as, since the Warnock Report (1978), dominant political agendas have advocated education of children with SEN in a mainstream placement, often referred to as inclusion, as a human right and a morally correct course of action (Croll and Moses, 2000; Lindsay, 2007). However, parents and EPs have knowledge that the reality is that these mainstream placements do not possess the specialist resources and trained staff located in an alternative placement. Therefore, when emotion pertaining to the drive to do what is morally

correct and logic about what is practically available meet, a dual educational placement may be presented as a fair compromise.

Dominant constructs of inclusion appear to have moved away from a more simplistic perspective of placing a child with SEN in a mainstream placement alongside 'normally' developing peers (Fredrickson, Miller and Cline, 2008) to a more multifaceted construct about being socially included and accessing the same educational opportunities (Norwich, 2008; Warnock, 2005). This multifaceted construct of inclusion may be reflected in the perception of parents and EPs: that a child not only requires the social aspect of education from the mainstream placement but also the educational aspect from the alternative placement. In line with the constructivist view, it is postulated that how an individual constructs the concept of inclusion will affect the extent to which they perceive a dual educational placement to be a worthy educational placement option. It may be that the dominant governmental policies on inclusion have recently shifted or are in the process of endeavouring to alter which, in line with the constructivist view point, will be important for production of individuals' thoughts about inclusion. The 2011 Green Paper advocated 'removing the bias towards inclusion' which, it is thought, may in part be a response to parents as, when given the choice, sometimes they opt to educate their child in educational placements other than the mainstream. The researcher seconds the query stated by Flewitt and Nind (2007) of where does it leave the concept of inclusion if parents are unconvinced that one setting alone can meet their child's needs?

It is considered by the researcher that there is a relationship between the dominant political considerations of educational placement of a child with SEN and parent perceptions of dual educational placement in particular. The 2011 Green Paper requested that parents should have more options for the education of their child with SEN and that a flexible approach should be taken to meeting the needs of children with SEN, including placement in mainstream and alternative settings concurrently. In line with this, parents in this research perceived that a dual educational placement afforded them greater educational options for their child.

Parents and EPs noted that there are individual differences between characteristics of a child's SEN which influence the effectiveness of attending a dual educational

placement. This perception corresponds with the constructivist proposition that there will be multiple realities or individual constructs about the same experience (Kincheloe, 2005,). This supports the theory that a multi-dimensional model of provision, which takes into account a range of variables, is preferable (Norwich, 2008). Parent and EP perceptions that children diagnosed as being on the Autistic Spectrum may particularly struggle with a dual educational placement draws on theories about autism which suggest a preference for routine; therefore, the reduced continuity in educational experience, identified in dual educational placements, may be especially challenging for these individuals.

Educational Psychologists proposed that a fundamental purpose of a dual educational placement is to support parents who are experiencing difficulty in coming to terms with their child's SEN. Connor (1997) proposed that a bereavement model of parenting a child with SEN influences a parent's perception about where their child should receive an educational placement. It is suggested that parents are motivated to educate a child in an alternative school placement due to a sense of loss of a 'normal' child. By placing them in an alternative educational placement, it is proposed that it 'protects' parents from constant reminders of 'loss suffered' when they compare their child with children in a mainstream placement. Conversely, Connor (1997) suggests that parents of children with SEN also educate their child in a mainstream educational placement because they are in 'denial' about their child's level of need.

Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory may be reflected in Connor's (1997) bereavement model of parenting a child with SEN. Festinger (1954) suggests that individuals evaluate themselves through comparison with others, and perception of similarity between ourselves and others is more favourable than difference. Therefore, by parents choosing to educate their child in an alternative placement, they are selecting an option that may compare more favourably. This theory may also be supported by parent perceptions in this research: that by a child with SEN spending time within an alternative placement, it gives them the opportunity to mix with peers with whom they have more in common.

It may be claimed that parents' and EPs' perceptions are analogous with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory in that they suggest that education of a child within a

mainstream placement supports development of social competencies through providing them with positive role models, as well as a range of stimulation and language. The social learning theory suggests that children learn through observation and imitation of their peers, modelling behaviours and language. Dodge's (1986) model of social exchange in children suggests that there are five aspects to social interaction which are: the event; a child's thoughts about an event; a child's behaviour; their peers' behaviour; and a child's thoughts about their peers' behaviour. This also supports the idea that children with SEN will learn social competency skills by being in an environment with peers who are able to be positive social role models.

Vygotsky (1962, 1978), in the theory of social development, suggested that language is a tool for learning and is necessary for social development. Again, this may support the parent and EP perceptions that a child requires education in a mainstream setting to access a richer experience of language from their peers and that this is required for learning. However, Vygotsky (1962, 1978) also coined the term 'zone of proximal development' which allows an alternative application of this theory. The zone of proximal development refers to the area between what a child is capable of doing independently and what a child can achieve with adult support (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). It is suggested that a child will learn best when tasks are presented within the child's zone of proximal development, to enable them to access the learning opportunities and make progress with appropriate support. It would appear that many parents and EPs identified that this targeted teaching approach was more readily available in an alternative placement than a mainstream placement.

Bandura (1977) noted that there is a continuous reciprocal interaction between a child's environment, thoughts and their behaviour; this again highlights the importance of a child's environment on their development. Bandura (1977) coined the term 'reciprocal determinism' which relates to the idea that environmental influences will not only affect an individual but the individual will also affect their environment. This idea can be related to the perceptions exhibited by some EPs in this research: that education of a child with SEN in a mainstream placement will affect other individuals, such as peers and school staff, as well as the child with SEN. EPs noted, in this research, that having a child with SEN within a mainstream placement may teach other individuals to be socially inclusive and accepting of diversity. This theory may

also be evident in the perception that education of a child with SEN within a mainstream placement may also foster greater social integration within their local community.

Maslow (1943), in the theory of human motivation, developed a hierarchy of needs which, in hierarchical order, were physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem and self-actualisation. Maslow (1943) proposed that the extent to which the first four needs are satisfied would impact on an individual's motivation to achieve self-actualisation which is, in turn, related to fulfilling one's potential. It may be suggested that the limitation noted, particularly by parents, of distance of travel to an alternative placement will have a negative impact on their fulfilment of basic physiological needs as children were reported to experience tiredness as a consequence. Also, the perception of the benefit of a part-time education in an alternative placement to provide specialist resources for a child may relate to fulfilling a child's safety needs. The perception held by parents and EPs, that a mainstream placement may have a positive effect of increasing the likelihood of a child being more socially included, might relate to the suggested need to belong. Finally, children with SEN experiencing both belonging in a mainstream placement and in an alternative placement perceiving themselves as comparable to their peers may have a positive influence on their self-esteem. Therefore, by attending a dual educational placement, the impact of each placement on the child might mean that overall a child's physiological, safety, belongingness and esteem needs can be met, allowing them to achieve their potential in self-actualisation.

As noted previously, due to the exploratory nature of this research, a wide breadth of findings has been identified. As illustrated above, these findings can be interpreted via several different theories. It is perceived by the researcher that it would not be correct to attempt to justify all the findings of this research with one theoretical interpretation.

It would appear that placement of a child with SEN remains a complex issue. In line with Norwich's (2008) suggestion, it is also argued here that educating a child with SEN at two simultaneous part-time placements can overcome many tensions between the benefits and limitations identified at individual placements, and provide a

balanced placement which may cater for a child's needs holistically. However, the researcher cautions the fact that, in order for a child with SEN to benefit from the experience of a dual educational placement, firstly the individual needs of the child must be considered; secondly, effort must be made by parents, professionals, including EPs and staff at the two placements to ensure effective mesosystems of communication, organisation, collaborative working, and consistency between the three microsystems of parents, mainstream and alternative placement. The researcher puts forward the idea that the most comprehensive interpretation of the findings from this initial exploratory study may, however, be drawn from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model of Human Development, of which details were given above.

5.3 Critique of Methodology

It should be acknowledged that, whilst the qualitative methodological framework used in this research opened up the exploration of parent and EP perceptions of dual educational placements and allowed discovery of various important information and perspectives, it was necessary for the researcher to accept some methodological restrictions to achieve this.

The researcher utilised an interview-guided approach for data collection which comes under the umbrella category of an unstructured interview (Patton, 1980) whereby the uniqueness of participant's perceptions is captured. Consequently, the reliability of the data collected in this research may be constrained as participant's responses were individual and are unlikely to be replicable. Additionally, the interview data collection tool is time consuming which limited the number of participants who contributed to this research. The researcher also noted that all participants were White British and came from the East Anglian region of Britain. Therefore, it is difficult to take perceptions of dual educational placements held by parents and EPs interviewed in this research and generalise them unquestionably beyond the limits of this research.

It should be cautioned that, although a purposive sampling method was used in this research, participation was voluntary which meant that parents and EPs were able to

choose not to participate. It may be that those who chose to participate held different perceptions about dual educational placements to those who did not; this again affects the ability to generalise findings to those who did not participate (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008). This may, in particular, be the case for parents as some EPs did not wish to give contact details of parents with whom they had been involved. Nonetheless, the findings of this research produced several themes consistent with earlier research about educational placements and can provide a useful platform from which future investigation can develop; this will be discussed in greater detail in section 5.4 of this chapter.

The researcher acknowledges that, when using an interview data collection tool, there might be a tendency for participants to provide socially desirable responses. Interview responses have been suggested as less reliable than non face-to-face methods, such as a self administered questionnaire, as people are thought to be influenced by the presence of the interviewer and possibly give less honest answers. However, it was perceived by the researcher that, in this instance, authenticity of the data collected was most important and, by using an interview data collection tool, the interviewer can make a truer assessment about what the respondent really believes (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2008).

In line with the constructivist epistemological position of this research, as the researcher also conducted the interviews, the researcher is likely to have brought their own internal values and beliefs to each interview. The researcher took care to ensure reflexivity during the interview so they did not bias the interviews. This was also counterbalanced by having an interview guided structure to ensure a level of equality and continuity between the interviews. The researcher perceives that, by conducting interviews, it is likely that the validity of the data was preserved to a greater degree when analysed as the researcher coding the data has contextual knowledge of the interview in real-time. Furthermore, the researcher enlisted a colleague from Children's Services at the data analysis stage to check the inter-rater reliability of the data to increase the reliability of data analysis. The reliability of the data may be further increased via double coding the data (Miles and Huberman, 1984) but, in this instance, there was not sufficient time or resources available to the researcher for this to be carried out.

It should be acknowledged that, because the Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis procedure was completed with one data set first - namely parent - before the second data set - the EPs - by the same researcher and concurrently, it is possible that the researcher may have been primed to notice similar themes. However, the researcher endeavoured to approach the data with an open mind, prepared to discover what was in the data. If this study were to be replicated, transcripts of participants from the two groups may be analysed together to counterbalance any priming effect.

As proposed in Chapter 3, the researcher used the accounts suggested by Maxwell (1992) of types of validity, as well as internal and external validity suggested by LeCompete and Preissle (1993), to monitor the validity in this qualitative research. The researcher ensured factual accuracy of the reported data through recording the interviews and using exact quotes as evidence of findings. When interpreting the data, the researcher benefited from also assuming the role of interviewer as they were able to check meanings of answers given by participants during the interview process. It is acknowledged by the researcher that this aspect of validity could have been enhanced via presentation of the findings to the participants to check the extent to which they agree with the interpretation of the data, post analysis; however, due to time constraints, this was not possible. The researcher believes that they have been transparent with the constructivist epistemological position they assumed in this research and the impact it had on the choice of methodological design, as well as interpretation of the findings which was stated in Chapter 3. The researcher has also maintained a reflexive approach to the research and highlighted any points which may have had an impact on the findings (Nightingale and Comby, 1999).

As proposed in Chapter 3, the reliability of this research was judged from the suggested perspective of Boyatzis (1998) who stated that reliability of findings produced using the data analysis tool of thematic analysis can be the extent to which they are in agreement with previous research. As noted above, there was much overlap between themes identified in this research and those found in previous research.

5.4 Implications for Further Research

To echo the suggestion made by Flewitt and Nind (2007), it is believed that further research is required to determine how the children who experience the dual educational placements make sense of their mixed educational experiences. The findings of this research show that EPs perceived dual educational placements could be made more effective through further research being conducted in this domain so that their practice would be evidence-based. Therefore, it may be assumed that there is a desire from stakeholders for further research on the topic of dual educational placements. Research eliciting the views of children experiencing dual educational placements was noted by EP participants in this research to be an area of particular interest.

As previously noted, the majority of earlier research appears to be in relation to children in secondary and further education; therefore, it is possible that future research eliciting the views of primary aged children may be particularly useful as the differences between characteristics of primary and secondary placements will mean that children's experiences may be different. Additionally, no known research had previously been carried out in this domain.

As stated earlier, this research aimed to be an initial exploration into the perception of dual educational placements held by parents of children who were experiencing or had experienced a placement of this nature, and EPs who had encountered dual educational placements in their practice. As a consequence of the openness of the research, a breadth of findings were discovered pertaining to several areas which may be of interest to explore in greater depth. Some of the most interesting may be as follows:

It seems from the findings of this research and that of earlier research (Flewitt and Nind, 2007) that EP and professional input in dual educational placements may be valued by parents. However, overall there was incongruence between the primary activities parents and EPs reported EPs being involved with. Therefore, it may be of interest to determine, through further research, what the future role of the EP could be in relation to dual educational placements.

Main points discovered in this research were that communication, continuity and organisation appear to be significant factors in ensuring the success of a dual educational placement. Therefore, it is likely that identification of the processes required to ensure effective communication would be of great value.

Findings of this research also suggested that individual characteristics of a child's SEN can play a part in determining the effectiveness of a dual educational placement. It may be of interest to explore this relationship in more detail: for example, by measuring satisfaction with educational placement in relation to different categories of need. This will subsequently feed into evidence-based practice pertaining to the decision about educating a child in a dual educational placement.

5.5 Implications for Dual Educational Placements

Although only minimal research had been previously conducted in the area of dual educational placement, it appeared that many of the findings in this research were consistent with previous literature (Flewitt and Nind, 2007; Willson, 2006). Minimal research had been conducted on parents' perceptions of dual educational placements and no research on EPs' perceptions of dual educational placements. Therefore, this research will contribute to the knowledge base pertaining to the topic of dual educational placements.

This research suggests that a dual educational placement is considered a valuable option by parents and EPs. As such, it may be important to raise awareness of this type of placement with those who make placement decisions - for example, caseworkers - to facilitate its consideration when assessing what placement would best meet a child's SEN.

Some parents in this research stated that they were unable to access relevant information about dual educational placements from the local authority. It is perceived that this could highlight the need for local authorities to consider developing a dual educational placement policy which will be based on research evidence and accessible by parents. This finding may also indicate that local authority staff

awareness of the option of a dual educational placement, and its evidence base, needs to be improved.

The findings of this research suggest that organisation of a dual educational placement might play a significant part in determining if it will be successful or not. Therefore, it is thought that greater attention may be needed to put procedures in place at the onset of a dual educational placement to ensure that it is set up effectively; for example, all parties involved establishing lines of communication and agreeing objectives.

Some parents in this research noted that they felt isolated from other parents whose children were also experiencing a dual educational placement. Therefore, it is suggested that a future improvement may be the arrangement of a network of support for parents of children experiencing a dual educational placement within the county.

The social implications of mainstream placements were discussed in this research. Both parents and EPs perceived that a mainstream placement may be beneficial for development of a child's social interaction skills; nonetheless, EPs cautioned that, in instances where a child cannot access the social opportunities of a mainstream placement, they may find themselves socially isolated in that setting. This realises the issue that individual differences in a child's ability to access social opportunities should be considered as part of deliberation about a dual educational placement.

It may also be noted that the strengths and limitations of dual educational placements discovered in this research may be important for professionals and parents to have in mind when considering or monitoring a child's dual educational placement. Information from this research supports evidence based monitoring of the impact of a dual educational placement in meeting a child's SEN and being explicit about the expected outcomes of the placement.

It may also be noted from the findings of this research that parents identified a reason for pursuing a dual educational placement as giving them an opportunity to consider the benefits which each placement has for their child, to make a decision about their child's future educational placement. Therefore, it may be derived that a dual

educational placement may serve a purpose - for some - as an assessment placement.

The observation that participants in this research, in agreement with participants in previous research, suggest that dual educational placements may be considered the 'best of both worlds' indicates that there is an opportunity for each placement to learn from one another.

5.6 Stakeholders and Participants

Although the research is small in scale and therefore it is not suitable to suggest that it will have a wide spread impact, it is anticipated that it will be a useful platform to inform evidence-based practice, initially within the region it was conducted.

The researcher intends that they will give feedback to some of the parent participants through presenting the research to a parent organisation to which two of the parent participants belong as, at the time of their interviews, their interest in the outcome of the findings was noted.

The researcher will also present their findings to EP colleagues within the area where the research was conducted. It is envisaged that EPs will utilise information provided from this research about dual educational placements in their practice.

It is likely that the findings of this research will be of interest to parent advocate organisations such as Parent Partnership and Children's Services professionals, such as SEN Caseworkers. Therefore, the researcher also plans to share research findings with these organisations within the area they are currently employed.

These findings will also contribute to the production of County Council policy/guidelines on dual educational placements.

5.7 Implications for Educational Psychologists

The broader implication of this research is that research findings will contribute to the evidence based practice of EPs, particularly the area within which the researcher works. The research findings may be particularly informative when EPs are required to provide advice regarding suitability of an educational placement for a particular pupil. It is possible that EPs have an opportunity to extend their supporting role to parents in consideration of a dual educational placement, as this was identified as a positive experience.

It is postulated by the researcher that the findings of the research may guide EP assessment of how a dual educational placement will, or is, meeting the needs of a child with SEN. It indicates that attention needs to be afforded by EPs to mesosystems of communication, consistency and organisation to ensure effectiveness. It is also likely that EPs should identify if a child's individual SEN means that they are able to access the benefits proposed by both educational placements.

At the same time, EPs should give consideration to the limitations proposed by a dual educational placement: inability to access social opportunities and confidence of staff in their ability to meet a child's SEN in a mainstream setting. It is suggested by the researcher that EPs are well placed in supporting mainstream placements in their role to work towards overcoming these limitations. This could be achieved through practical suggestions, such as those given in this research, as well as training of school staff which is commonly part of the EP role.

5.8 Research Reflections

At the outset of this research, the researcher perceived all pupils being educated together within a single mainstream educational placement as best educational practice for any child. It was thought that inclusion, in the simplest sense, was the method which ensured provision of the best possible education for a child and would support them in reaching their potential. However, after hearing the challenges posed by professionals and parents presented in previous research and this research, the

evidence changed the researcher's views. The researcher continues to consider inclusion as a concept which is ethically right to strive for. However, to insist on this type of inclusion, in the sense of all children being educated in the same place, without thorough research into the experience and outcomes of various educational placements could be considered questionable. The researcher accepts the view that inclusion relates to being socially and academically included (Norwich, 2008). The researcher also understands that this may only be achieved through a whole society culture shift which, in turn, is likely to filter into a shift in ethos within mainstream school placements (Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004). The researcher deems that it is rational to accept that shifting the culture of society to being almost seamlessly inclusive will take time. In the meantime, insisting a child with SEN attends a mainstream educational placement, and disregarding the benefits of an alternative placement as well as the limitations of a mainstream placement, may result primarily in the child being disadvantaged and their SEN not being met. The researcher considers it to be misguided to pursue a previously politically popular 'ideology' of mainstream placement-type inclusion when it appears that currently that 'ideology' does not exist in reality. The researcher suggests that a dual educational placement may be an effective compromise between the desired type of inclusion and the reality of what is achievable currently in society (Croll and Moses, 2000). A dual educational placement may also be a platform from which inclusive education, in the sense of all children being educated together, could more easily develop.

5.9 Concluding Comments

Consideration of the historical perspective about educational placements illustrated the relationship between placement of children with SEN, in practice, and dominant ideas presented in government commissioned legislation. Prior to the late 1900s, the dominant theoretical concept of SEN was rooted in a medical model of disability, viewing difficulties within a child and leading to segregated education. In the late 1900s, integration and then inclusion assumed the position as a leading idea. This viewing of SEN as primarily the impact of a child's environment, coupled with the emergence of the social model of disability, lead to increased education of children deemed to have SEN alongside their peers in mainstream placements (Runswick-Cole, 2008).

The incidence of children placed in segregated/alternative placements and inclusive/mainstream placements is said to have stabilised since approximately the year 2000 (Norwich, 2008). It could be suggested that this is because a barrier to achieving an 'inclusive' education system is that the dominant ideas presented in government reports and legislation is based on the moral doctrine of human rights and not on research evidence (Lindsay, 2007). Professionals responsible for the implementation of inclusion are reported to experience tension between ethical pressures to achieve inclusion and pragmatic realities of resources (Croll and Moses, 2000). They are also said to experience the dilemma of meeting a child's individual needs and providing them with a sense of belonging (Norwich, 2008).

In line with the constructivist epistemological position that there are multiple realities, there are several definitions of inclusion which may be a product of challenges to implementing it. Some definitions advocate the traditional definition of all children being educated together (Barnes, 1990); some propose a learning definition (Warnock, 2005); and others highlight the need to consider social aspects as well as academic ones when pursuing an inclusive education for a child with SEN (Norwich, 2008).

When research is conducted which investigates educational placement of children with SEN, the support for education alongside peers in a mainstream school does not

appear to be as overwhelming as might be expected from the prevailing narratives. Lindsay (2007) noted that there is no clear endorsement of a mainstream educational placement. Research carried out pertaining to placement of children with SEN reported that they should have the opportunity to attend mainstream or alternative placements, based on individual needs (Shah, 2007). Other research suggested no single placement can meet the needs of all children with SEN throughout their academic careers (Pitt and Curtin, 2004). Furthermore, previous research suggested that a dual educational placement may be an effective means to facilitate social and cognitive development (Shah, Travers and Arnold, 2004) and to take into consideration a variety of attributes (Norwich, 2008). This warranted investigation of whether or not a dual educational placement is a viable education option for a child with SEN.

Early research into dual educational placements reported that parents found the decision to educate their child in this type of placement difficult but felt supported by professional advice (Flewitt and Nind, 2007). It was claimed that communication with, and positive relationships between, staff at both placements and parents was supportive of the success of a dual educational placement (Flewitt and Nind, 2007; Willson, 2006). It also highlighted that lack of consistency and attitude of school staff were the main challenges of dual educational placements (Willson, 2006). Previous research about dual educational placements also indicated that there were beneficial aspects to both placements, naming the mainstream placement as an opportunity for a child with SEN to develop social connections with their local community and the alternative placement as providing access to specialist resources and education. It was reported that, by combining the two settings in a dual educational placement, it was felt that a child would be able to access the best support available and have all their needs met from both placements (Flewitt and Nind, 2007).

This study continues and extends the initial exploration into the topic of dual educational placements. It investigates the perceptions of dual educational placements held by parents who have had experience of their child receiving this category of education, and perceptions of dual educational placements held by EPs who have encountered this type of placement during their practice. Findings from this research replicated some of those reported in previous research. In line with previous

research findings, communication was suggested as a precursor to a successful dual educational placement. Lack of consistency and poor staff attitude were stated as challenges. It was considered that children with SEN would have the opportunity to be socially included in their local community at a mainstream placement. It was found that specialist resources and teaching could best be provided at an alternative placement. In addition, the findings from this research suggested that how a dual educational placement is organised is likely to be a precursor to its success. Further benefits of social competencies development opportunities and motivational influences were attributed to a mainstream placement. Findings of this research supported the idea that individual characteristics of a child's SEN are an important consideration when debating a dual educational placement. Dual educational placements were viewed as an opportunity for a child to have either option of educational placement, support for parents having difficulty coming to terms with their child's SEN and access to the beneficial experiences provided by both environments.

A dual educational placement may be a method for addressing an ethical desire for inclusion and a practical need for accessing the benefits which are currently only available in alternative placements. This research, in agreement with claims made in previous investigations (Flewitt and Nind, 2007; Willson, 2006), proposes that a dual educational placement is a worthwhile option for meeting a child's SEN and has the potential to provide 'the best of both worlds'.

Chapter 6

References

6.0 References

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Chapter 7

Appendices

7.0 Appendix 1 - Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria of the Systematic Literature Review of Dual Educational Placements

Search Term	Exclusion Criteria	Inclusion Criteria	Number of Abstracts Read	Read in Full
dual educational placement	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None required as no articles were found.	0	0
split educational placement	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	Articles relating to topics of: special education, inclusive education, students with disabilities and mainstream education.	9	4
	<p>Articles</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Shah, S. Travers, C. and Arnold, J. (2004) Disabled and successful: education in the life stories of disabled high achievers. <u>Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs</u> 4(3): pp.122–132. 2 Pitt, V. and Curtin, M. (2004) Integration versus segregation: the experiences of a group of disabled students moving from mainstream school into special needs further education. <u>Disability and Society</u> 19(4): pp.387-401. 3 Shah, S. (2007) Special of mainstream? The views of disabled students. <u>Research Papers in Education</u> 22(4): pp.425-442. 4 Flewitt, R. and Nind, M. (2007) Parents choosing to combine special and inclusive early years settings: the best 			

	of both worlds? <u>European Journal of Special Needs Education</u> 22(4) pp.425-441.			
divided educational placement	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used.	1	0
split school placement	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	Articles relating to topics of: special education, inclusive education, students with disabilities and mainstream education.	13	0
split educational provision	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	Articles relating to topics of: special education, inclusive education, students with disabilities and mainstream education.	16	1
	Articles 5 Norwich, B. (2008) What future for special schools and inclusion? Conceptual and professional perspectives. <u>British Journal of Special Education</u> 35(3): pp.136 – 142.			
split school provision	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	Articles relating to topics of: special education, inclusive education, students with disabilities and mainstream education.	13	1
	Articles			

	6 Lindsay, G. (2007) Educational psychology and the effectiveness of inclusive education/mainstreaming. <i>British Journal of Educational Psychology</i> . 77: pp.1-24.			
two schools and special educational needs	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used.	1	0
divided schooling	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	Subject: educational change, not traditional education.	3	0
education and special and mainstream	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	Articles relating to topics of: special education, inclusive education, students with disabilities and mainstream education.	22	0
split educational placement and educational psychology	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	Articles relating to topics of: special education, inclusive education, students with disabilities and mainstream education.	5	0
combination educational placement	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the	None used.	1	0

	United Kingdom.			
combination educational provision	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	Articles relating to topics of: special education, inclusive education, students with disabilities and mainstream education.	33	2
	Articles 7 Croll, P. and Moses, P. (2000) Ideologies and utopias: education professionals' views of inclusion. <u>European Journal of Special Needs Education</u> . 15(1): pp.1-12.			
combination schooling	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used.	7	0
mixed educational placement	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	Articles relating to topics of: special education, inclusive education, students with disabilities and mainstream education.	80	0
mixed educational provision	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	Articles relating to topics of: special education, inclusive education, students with disabilities and mainstream education.	6	0
mixed schooling	Articles prior to 2000.	None used.	23	0

and combination education with special and mainstream	Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.			
Part-time placement	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used.	3	0
Part-time Education	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used.	3	0
Education Placement	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used.	63	0
Total				7

7.1 Appendix 2 - Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria of the Systematic Literature Review of Parents Views on Inclusion and Alternative placements

Search Term	Exclusion Criteria	Inclusion Criteria	Number of Abstracts Read	Read in Full
Inclusion & parents & views	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	0	0
Parents & education & inclusion	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	2	1
Articles 1 – Fredrickson. N, Dunsmiur. S, Lang. J, and Monsen. J.J (2002) Mainstream-special school inclusion partnerships: pupil, parent and teacher perspectives. <u>International Journal of Inclusive Education</u> 8(1): pp.37 – 57.				
Parents & education & special school	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	2	1 (as above)

Parents mainstream special	& &	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	3	1
Article 2 - Runswick-Cole, K. (2008) Between a rock and a hard place: parents' attitudes to the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream and special schools. <u>The Author(s) Journal Compilation.</u> Oxford: Blackwell publishing.					
Parents attitudes inclusion	& &	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	2	0
Inclusion parents mainstream	& &	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	3	1 (as above)
Total					2

- * Articles evaluating specific inclusion intervention programmes or tools were excluded.
- * Articles relating to a specific special educational need were excluded.
- * Articles that where participants were not from the United Kingdom or conducted in the since 2000 were excluded.

7.2 Appendix 3 - Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria of the Systematic Literature Review of Educational Psychologist Views on Inclusion and Alternative placements

Search Term	Exclusion Criteria	Inclusion Criteria	Number of Abstracts Read	Read in Full
Educational Psychologists & Inclusion	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	7	1
Article 1 – Hardman, M. and Worthington, J. (2000) Educational Psychologists' Orientation to Inclusion and Assumptions about Children's Learning. Educational Psychology in Practice. 16 (3). Pp 349 - 360				
Educational Psychologists	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	12	1 (as above)
Educational Psychologists & Special Schools & Views	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	7	0
Educational	Articles prior to 2000.	None used	0	0

Psychologists & Special Educational Needs & mainstream	Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.			
Professionals & Special Educational Needs & Inclusion	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	9	0
Psychologist & education & mainstream	Articles prior to 2000. Not English. Not conducted in the United Kingdom.	None used	7	0
Total				1

7.3 Appendix 4 - Email to Educational Psychologists Inviting them to Participate in the Research

Dear Educational Psychologist

Re: Postgraduate Research

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist employed in the North Norfolk Educational Psychology and Support Service. I am currently completing a Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology at the University of East London. To carry out the research component of the course I will be undertaking a thesis. I would like to explore **Educational Psychologist (EP) and parental perceptions of dual educational placements** in the Norfolk area. This subject has been chosen because there appears to have been an increase in prevalence of meeting a child's educational needs via this type of placement. It therefore appears to be an area that is important to investigate.

I hope to gain EP and parental views by carrying out approximately half hour semi-structured interviews with these participants and using the method of thematic analysis to explore the data obtained. The interviews would be conducted at an appropriate venue that is convenient for participants.

I am contacting you to ask if you would be able or willing to consider participating in my research. I would very much like the opportunity to speak to you if you are currently involved with, or have been involved with, a case where a child is receiving education in the course of one week at two separate educational locations. The dual educational placement does not have to be formal, i.e. written in the child's statement; it can be an informal agreement between schools and the local authority.

I very much hope to hear from you.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like further information on [number] or my email me at this address.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Burton

Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist

7.4 Appendix 5 - Letter to Parents Inviting them to Participate in the Research

Dear Parent

Re: Postgraduate Research

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist employed in the North Norfolk Educational Psychology and Support Service. I am currently completing a Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology at the University of East London. To carry out the research component of the course I will be undertaking a thesis. I would like to explore **Educational Psychologist (EP) and parental perceptions of dual educational placements** in the Norfolk area. This subject has been chosen because there appears to have been an increase in prevalence of meeting a child's educational needs via this type of placement. It therefore appears to be an area that is important to investigate.

I hope to gain EP and parental views by carrying out approximately half hour semi-structured interviews with these participants and using the method of thematic analysis to explore the data obtained. The interviews would be conducted at an appropriate venue that is convenient for participants.

I am contacting you to ask if you would be able or willing to consider participating in my research. I would very much like the opportunity to speak to you if your son or daughter is currently experiencing, or has experienced, education in the course of one week at two separate educational locations. The dual educational placement does not have to be formal, i.e. written in the child's statement; it can be an informal agreement between schools and the local authority.

I will telephone you on the 28th June 2010 to see if you are interested in participating.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like further information on [number] or my email address is [email].

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Burton

Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist

7.5 Appendix 6 - Parent Interview Schedule

Interview Guide – Parents	
Rapport Building and Basic Details	<p>Introductions (names)</p> <p>Child's age</p> <p>What are the two types of educational placements that your son/daughter attends?</p>
History	<p>Age child was when dual educational placement began?</p> <p>How did your child's dual educational placement originate?</p> <p>What advice were you given at the time?</p> <p>What did you take into consideration at the time?</p>
Experience	<p>Tell me about your experience of your child attending a dual educational placement?</p> <p>Positive or negative?</p> <p>What challenges arose and how have these been overcome?</p> <p>What do you think that each educational placement brings to your son/daughter's educational experience?</p>
Educational Beliefs	<p>What do you think is most important when considering an educational placement for a child?</p> <p>What aspects do you think might influence how effective a dual educational placement is?</p>
Dual Educational Placements as a Whole	<p>Do you see dual educational placements as an effective option for all children with SEN?</p> <p>What informs your opinion?</p>
Future	<p>How do you think the experience of a dual educational placement might affect your child's educational and post educational future?</p>
Probes Checking Out Questions	<p>Can you tell me more about that? Why? Repeat question.....</p> <p>Do you mean.....?</p> <p>Let me see if I have understood what you are saying correctly?</p>

7.6 Appendix 7 - Educational Psychologist Interview Schedule

Interview Guide – Educational Psychologists	
Rapport Building and Basic Details	Professional title How many years practice
Experience	What previous or current experiences have you had in the area of dual educational placements? What ages were the children you've been involved with? What were the children's SEN? What do you think each placement brings to a child's educational experience? Have your experiences with dual educational placements been predominately positive or negative? What challenges arose and how have these been overcome?
EP Role	How have you been involved in decision making about a dual educational placement? Do you think EPs should have more involvement with dual educational placements? How do you find a child's dual educational placement typically
Educational Beliefs	What do you think is important when considering an educational placement for a child? Are there aspects which you believe might influence how affective a dual educational placement?
Dual Educational Placements as a whole	Do you see dual educational placements as a valid option for all children with SEN? What informs your opinion?
Probes and Checking Out Question	Can you tell me more about that? Why? Repeat question.... Do you mean...? Let me see if i have understood what you are saying correctly?

7.7 Appendix 8 - Participant Information Handout

Name of University which the researcher attends:

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Stratford Campus

Water Lane

London

E15 4LZ

University Research Ethics Committee

If you have any queries regarding the conduct of the programme in which you are being asked to participate please contact the Secretary of the University Research Ethics Committee: Ms D Dada, Administrative Officer for Research, Graduate School, University of East London, Docklands Campus. London E16 2RD (telephone 0208 223 2976 e-mail d.dada@uel.ac.uk)

The Principal Investigator:

Miss Sarah Burton

Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist

The Children's Services and Education Office,

[Work address]

Mobile number: [number] (8.30am – 7.30pm, Monday – Saturday)

Email: [address]

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The purpose of this information is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Title

An exploratory study of parent and Educational Psychologist perceptions of dual educational placements

Description

The aim of this research is to investigate the perceptions of dual educational placements held by Educational Psychologists and parents of pupils receiving this nature of education. The information gathered will contribute to and extend knowledge available in this area which currently has limited research.

As a research participant you would be asked to give your opinions regarding dual educational placements, for example, the strengths and limitations of this nature of education. The activity you are invited to participate in is an unstructured interview, involving questions and open discussion that will last approximately 30 minutes and will be recorded using a dictaphone.

The principle researcher will ensure that the highest standards of respect and consideration are awarded to all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity will be upheld whilst the project is being undertaken, in the written report and thereafter. It is appreciated that for some the discussion may become emotive; however, it is ensured that the researcher will provide the upmost sensitivity. During participation in the unstructured interview clarification of information will be sought to ensure that your views are accurately represented. It must also be noted that a participant is able to withdraw from the research at any point without having to provide a reason.

After participation you will receive a briefing regarding how the information you provided will contribute to the research project. You will also have an opportunity to ask the researcher questions regarding the project. At this point any unforeseen negative effects will be addressed.

Confidentiality of the Data

All information gathered will be stored in a secure lockable cabinet and will only be accessed by the researcher. Once the data has been used anonymously in the final report all raw data such as discussion recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

Disclaimer

You are not obliged to take part in this study, and are free to withdraw at any time during the tests. Should you choose to withdraw from the programme you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this handout.

Kind regards

Sarah Burton

Doctoral Trainee Educational Psychologist

7.8 Appendix 9 - Participant Consent Form

**Consent to Participate in a Research Programme
Involving the Use of Human Participants**

Title: An exploratory study into parent and Educational Psychologist perceptions of dual educational placements.

I have read the information leaflet relating to the above programme of research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.

I understand that my involvement in this study and particular data from this research will remain strictly confidential. Only the researcher involved in the study, their university supervisor and one other Children's Services colleague will have access to the data. I also understand that any discussion about the information I provide will not involve names of parents, EPs, children or schools. It has been explained to me what will happen to the data once the research programme has been completed.

I hereby fully and freely consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me.

Having given this consent I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the programme at any time, without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give a reason.

Participant's name (BLOCK CAPITALS):_____

Participant's signature:_____

Investigator's name:_____

Investigator's signature:_____

Date:_____

7.9 Appendix 10 - Example Participant Transcript

Interview with Educational Psychologist

1

Researcher

Could you just tell me what your job title is?

Educational Psychologist

I'm and I'm an Educational Psychologist working in (county).

Researcher

Do you currently have any children currently on dual placement?

Educational Psychologist

I do actually; I have three students that I currently do casework with who are dual placed in mainstream and specialist provision.

Researcher

How long have you been working with them?

Educational Psychologist

Two of them I've seen for the past three years and one of them is just since September 2009.

Researcher

What are their dual placements?

Educational Psychologist

I've got one lad in Year 5 whose primary difficulty is ASD. He's dual placement with (special school) and a mainstream primary school. I've got a girl in Year 8 who is at (mainstream school) and she's dual placed at the (special school) and she has physical difficulties – she's got a rare form of cerebral palsy. I've got a lad at (mainstream school) and he's dual placed at (special school) and he's got global learning difficulties.

Researcher

How did these dual placements come about?

Educational Psychologist

The girl with physical difficulties started off in mainstream school until year 7. In year 7 her parents didn't think she would be able to cope with high school, so they kept her back a year at junior school to start with. That worked to a certain extent but it wasn't really addressing her needs particularly well, so they went to (mainstream high school) which is quite a good high school for children with difficulties; they've got quite good systems in place for them. School felt, yes, they could cope but they weren't sure if they would be able to address all her needs. Parents went to the (special school) and liked what they saw there, but still wanted the social side of the mainstream, so the decision was taken that a dual placement might be feasible. Special school were on board with it, mainstream school were on board with it, so she has most of her work set by the special school, but two days a week that she is at mainstream high school she has the work with her and she has the social side of it, being included with her peer group.

Researcher

So the social side comes from mainstream and the academic stuff is usually set by the special school.

Educational Psychologist

Yes

Researcher

How much involvement did you have?

Educational Psychologist

Transition – coming up to year 6 was when I first saw her. Her parents had big concerns; they'd become disengaged previously with the authority prior to my involvement, so it was quite tricky to get involved in the first instance. I think it was just because I was a different face that we were able to get a foot in the door. They had switched off from the authority, they'd had problems before. But once they realised there were options they became much more amenable to what we could offer them. We started off by just doing an assessment of their daughter to see where her strengths were and where she needed support, which hadn't really been done since she was about 6 and took it from there. It was a slow process, gaining their trust and gaining their confidence in what the authority could offer.

Researcher

So was it you, was it the authority or was it the parents that came up with the dual placement?

Educational Psychologist

It was a kind of middle-road. The parents had looked at special school, quite liked what they saw, but had some concerns about the other children and about the academic ability and the social side of it. They'd also looked, as I said, at mainstream school and were concerned that they may not be able to meet the physical side and the educational side, they weren't sure if they could differentiate enough. So it was kind of middle ground to have the dual placement to sort out the educational side and

the social side to have the best of both worlds. The only thing I get a little bit concerned about is that the child doesn't have stability of being in one school. So next Tuesday it could be special school, next Thursday mainstream and how she copes with that is sometimes a bit concerning.

Researcher

Would it be different for different children, your concern about consistency?

Educational Psychologist

I guess the child I am most concerned about is a lad with Autism, because for him there is absolutely no doubt that a special school could offer him opportunities that he doesn't get in the mainstream. I think how confusing it must be for him with a different set of teachers, different set of faces, different routines and with his difficulties anyway I do worry about him, I really do.

Researcher

Is that the sort of advice you give to parents?

Educational Psychologist

We do discuss the affect on the child. With him it's quite difficult. The parents don't live together. The father lives down in (town) so it's quite difficult for him to get up for a review. He still takes an active interest in his son. It's complicated for him. Placement wise, Mum has a lot of other things going on in her life, so it tends to be whatever the schools want, happens.

Researcher

So would you say that different cases vary?

Educational Psychologist

Yes, it can depend on the school, it can depend of the parents, it can depend on what's on offer. Some schools are not willing to consider dual placements really, they done feel that they are in a position where they can work in that way. Some parents don't like the ideal of it, which is fair enough; at the end of the day it's their choice.

Researcher

What sort of thing affects your decision, you've said of course the actual child's needs, but are there any other things you take into consideration when making a decision or offering advice.

Educational Psychologist

I tend not to advise whether a dual placement is right or not; what I tend to do is give the parents the options, there are usually three options, there's mainstream, there's special school or there's a dual placement. The only children I'm reluctant to shout about the dual placement to are those on the Autistic Spectrum, because I do think the stability with that is a big problem for them. I've seen dual placements work really well. Previously to being an EP I was a teacher and we had some children dual placed with a secondary mainstream high school. Some of those worked and some didn't. It's not always easy to analyse why. I guess the ones that didn't were where most of the placement was in a special school. The high school was seen as the social side of it but rarely happened. It tended to be that the child came to the high school, allegedly for the social side, but the other children would include to a certain extent, but the child wasn't integrated, it was definitely they were a separate entity. Other children looked after them but they weren't really integrated into the life of the school and that can make it difficult to do.

Researcher

Do you think that there is any way that could be improved? Is there anything that the school or we as educational psychologists could do?

Educational Psychologist

As an EP or as a teacher it's really useful to go and see the child in both settings, because sometimes you see a very different child. It can be very interesting to see how the child behaves and how they play off one setting against another. In terms of including a child within a setting, that can be really really hard when they're not there all the time and children make other friendship groups so it can be a problem. It's sometimes useful to set up something like a peer buddy system for the child, or something along the line of a circle of friends type arrangement. That's worked quite well for me in the past with dual placed children. Perhaps some of the children could go along to the special school to see what they do there with the dual placed child, so they have got some idea what's going on. The thing that works really well for the child at (mainstream school) is the TA that works with the child most of time, goes along to the special school with him so she knows exactly what they're doing and she knows what he does in mainstream, so that is working really really well. It's having that continuity. Someone who knows what is going on in both places.

Researcher

So what do you think each educational placement, in your opinion, brings to a child?

Educational Psychologist

OK, from what I've seen, from the limited experience I've got, the special schools have a different set of resources from the mainstream schools. That's not just physical resources, but resources in the development of training for their staff. Also equipment and special educational resources that they may have and mainstream schools don't. The special school he is placed at has a hydrotherapy pool, sensory rooms which are just not there at a mainstream school and you wouldn't expect them to be in a mainstream school. But when he's at the mainstream school he has the children that have the ability to chat to him, play with him, roll about on the floor with him, which is different from what he gets at (special school) because it is more adult attention and not so much child focussed attention, so there are different aspects. You do get some of the social side, but as I say it can be a concern, it depends how

it's handled. But then you've also got the specialism that a complex needs school can offer.

Researcher

So would you say it's a valid option for a child with special educational needs?

Educational Psychologist

I would say it's definitely a valid option. It's not an easy option to make for the parents because you have to weigh up the travelling distance, there's the unsettling factor of being in two different schools and of course their child's needs, and it's not an easy option for them to make, but it's a valid option.

Researcher

How do you think that being dual placed would influence their future?

Educational Psychologist

That's an interesting question actually because of the children I've seen the dual placements tend to go one way or the other. They either integrate into mainstream or into special school. Year 8 is the oldest child I seen dual placed, so it will be quite interesting to see how that develops, whether the parents will keep her at the (special School) or go towards (mainstream school) as she develops.

Researcher

So generally once they get to high school

Educational Psychologist

It's quite unusual to have them at high school – it tends to be the upper end of primary when they make that decision.

Researcher

Thank you very much.

End of Interview

Note: If you would like to view all transcripts with each line numbered please see the attached CD

7.10 Appendix 11 - Phase 3: Searching for Themes

POSITIVES OF A DUAL EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT		
POSITIVES OF MAINSTREAM	POSITIVES OF SPECIAL	INFLUENCES ON SUCCESS
<p>Social Side</p> <p>[access to] “ children that have the ability to chat to him, play with him, roll about on the floor with him, which is different from what he gets at [special]”</p> <p>The “two days a week she is as [mainstream] high school she has work with her and she has the social side of it, being included in her peer group”</p>	<p>“she has most of her work set by special school”</p> <p>Greater differentiation of work.</p> <p>Meet physical needs.</p> <p>“a different set of resources, not just physical resources, but in the development of training for their staff, Also, equipment and special educational needs resources that they may have and mainstream schools don’t [for example] hydrotherapy pool, sensory rooms”</p> <p>“More adult attention and not so much child focussed attention”</p> <p>“you’ve also got the specialism that a complex needs school can offer”</p>	<p>“it can depend on school, it can depend on parents, it can depend on what is on offer. Some schools are not willing to consider dual placements really, they don’t feel they are in a position where they can work that way. Some parents don’t like the idea of it, which is fair enough; at the end of the day it’s their choice”</p> <p>“it’s having that continuity. Someone who knows what’s going on in both places”</p>
<p>“another value which is for the community they are going in to. We shouldn’t be using young people in that sense per say but it is very interesting when you go to see these young people within a class setting with</p>	<p>“they..have the highest level of expertise and support” 75: 76</p> <p>“some of the lessons that are taught and the bases are much more around life skills and</p>	<p>“we have certain special schools in the area which are quite keen to have a link between their school and mainstream”</p>

<p>mainstream colleagues and counterparts, that actually the teacher is having to adjust and the pupils are having to adjust and work alongside and actually there is value for everyone in the social learning opportunities” 44:50</p> <p>“Trying to give the children positive role models I guess, the social would be at the mainstream school because they would have people with improved communication skills.” 54:56</p> <p>“increased interactions” 57</p>	<p>practices later on in special schools, are often deemed to be very useful to that group of people, just because it’s about carrying out practical activities” 166:168</p> <p>“I remember visits to schools where I’ve gone down to the shops with young people; a couple of sixth formers have gone down to the shop and the whole morning is based around the money, the getting the stuff, the getting back, creating and cooking with it or whatever you are doing in a practical sense” 168:172</p>	
<p>“good language and behaviour and social role models are what children would get” 115:116</p>		
<p>“I think the mainstream for children to be with their peer groups and experience the range of stimulation and language; experience you can get within mainstream school”52:54</p> <p>“by going to mainstream they have opportunity to interact with children who have better language, better social skills” 56:57</p>		
<p>“there were positives for the young person in relation to accessing a mainstream curriculum for part of the time and for much of the social</p>	<p>“there was opportunity to have some curricular activities which were relatively tuned to that young person’s needs through</p>	<p>“I think it depends on the structure, it depends on the nature of the two placements and how similar and dissimilar they are... such a challenge for</p>

<p>development that was required” 18:20</p> <p>“The mainstream setting can provide the socially appropriate peer group” 91:92</p>	<p>the special school” 20:22</p> <p>“special schools can provide the specialist curriculum” 90:90</p>	<p>that young person to be able to cope with the different arrangements 55:59</p> <p>“I think primary schools by and large feel more similar to special school arrangements, so it has been easier to assimilate the child across the two different settings” 59:61</p>
<p>“girls tend to be more socially capable or confident and I think the grounds for maintaining mainstream is that they are going to gain something from it socially” 64:75</p> <p>“they [teachers] feel there are social benefits from being in the mainstream” 158:159</p> <p>“it’s very much about the social and emotional wellbeing of the child and the extent to which the mainstream is giving them something positive” 162:146</p>	<p>“parents who have given it thought lots of them who have opted for special do so because they feel the children are going to gain greater independence there than they would in mainstream, where they necessarily need to have more support” 276:278</p> <p>“an environment where there are other people like them, where they are actually, probably expected to stand on their own two feet, which is interesting really isn’t it” 285:287</p> <p>“Protection of a smaller specialist environment” 315</p> <p>“children with quite complex needs need a peer group around them; a significant number of others who are of similar need” 200:201</p>	<p>“individual needs really, being very clear as to what they are and I suppose the rationale for that taster of both things would be all about” 42:44</p>
<p>“allow the pupil to remain part of their community, and to</p>	<p>“so you get the specialist input from the special school. Smaller</p>	

<p>access more age appropriate role models in different areas within the mainstream" 45:46</p> <p>"the individuals I've been involved with have been able to maintain social groups in the mainstream" 94:96</p>	<p>classes, high levels of expertise, high level of resourcing" 43:44</p> <p>"getting the specialism in the special setting" 96</p>	
	<p>"the special schools have got hydrotherapy pools" 118</p>	<p>"I think it's about resources really isn't it, the different opportunities available" 116</p> <p>"I know from the schools point of view you have to have a very good level of communication with the special school and the mainstream school because you've got two different IEPs going on" 151:153</p> <p>"the ones that they feel are successful are often the ones where they have had really good open relationships and lot of time that depends on individual staff doesn't it and not having staff change over and everything else" 164:167</p>

